THE
CHILDREN'S STORY OF THE WAR

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By Sir Edward Parrott, M.A., LL.D.

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With the Royal Naval Air Service.

Watching a German submarine from a seaplane.

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THE CHILDREN'S STORY OF THE WAR

BY

SIR EDWARD PARROTT, M.A., LL.D.

AUTHOR OF "BRITAIN OVERSEAS," "THE PAGEANT
OF ENGLISH LITERATURE," ETC.

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From the Opening of the Somme Offensive
to the End of the Year 1916

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LONDON, EDINBURGH, AND NEW YORK
1917

SONG OF THE SOLDIERS.

What of the faith and fire within us
Men who march away
Ere the barn-cocks say
Night is growing gray,
To hazards whence no tears can win us?
What of the faith and fire within us
Men who march away?

Is it a purblind prank, O think you,
Friend with the musing eye,
Who watch us stepping by
With doubt and dolorous sigh?
Can much pondering so hoodwink you?
Is it a purblind prank, O think you,
Friend with the musing eye?

Nay. We well see what we are doing,
Though some may not see—
Dalliers as they be—
England's need are we;
Her distress would leave us rueing:
Nay. We well see what we are doing,
Though some may not see!

In our heart of hearts believing
Victory crowns the just,
And that braggarts must
Surely bite the dust,
Press we to the field ungrieving,
In our heart of hearts believing
Victory crowns the just.

Hence the faith and fire within us
Men who march away
Ere the barn-cocks say
Night is growing gray,
To hazards whence no tears can win us;
Hence the faith and fire within us
Men who march away.

THOMAS HARDY.

(*By kind permission.*)

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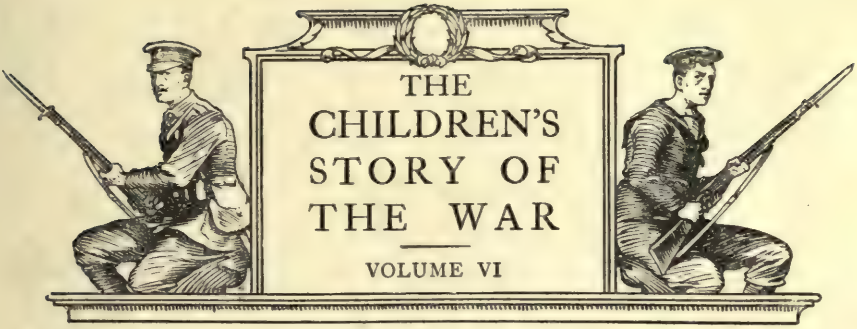


THE CHILDREN'S STORY OF THE WAR

VOLUME VI

CHAPTER I.

THE RISING SUN.

"*AND about this time the sun was rising, and this was another mercy to Christian; for you must note, that though the first part of the Valley of the Shadow of Death was dangerous, yet this second part, which he was yet to go, was, if possible, far more dangerous; for, from the place where he now stood, even to the end of the valley, the way was all along set so full of snares, traps, gins, and nets here, and so full of pits, pitfalls, deep holes, and shelvings down there, that, had it now been dark, as it was when he came to the first part of the way, had he had a thousand souls, they had in reason been cast away; but, as I said, just now the sun was rising. . . .*"

This passage from John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* gives us a striking picture of the state of mind of the British and French in the closing days of June 1916. They had passed through the first part of the Valley of the Shadow, and had only escaped being cast away by a miracle. Against them, in their weakness and unreadiness, had been hurled the full strength of the mightiest and the best-prepared military power in the world. Upon them had descended the hammer-strokes of the vastest and deadliest war machine that had ever been forged. While they resisted these gigantic blows with marvellous endurance, they had to labour night and day to create armies, and to equip them with resources such as the enemy possessed in full measure at the outset. They were in the position of the builders of the walls of Jerusalem: "They which builded on the wall, and they that bare burdens, with

"All's well now on the Western Front." [*Official photograph.*

British artillerymen and a heap of shell soon to be used in destroying German trenches. The shells appear to be those used in 18-pounder field guns.

those that laded, every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon." * By the closing days of June the double task had been accomplished—the enemy had been held off, and the wall had been built. The Western Allies were now ready for the second stage of the war. They were fully aware of all the dangers and difficulties that beset them on the path which they were about to tread; but their hopes were high, their hearts were stout, and their determination to win was stronger than ever. *Their sun was rising.*

Before I describe the "Great Push" which began on the bright summer morning of 1st July, let me give you some idea of how Britain set herself to surpass the great military machine which Germany had prepared during long, diligent, and secret years. In August 1914 we were only an insignificant military power, and the Germans were quite justified in believing that we should play but a small part in the land fighting. It is true that the small army of six divisions which we sent abroad at the outset of the war was composed of the most highly trained soldiers in the world; but had it been composed of Samsons, it could not have turned the scale against the millions which the Germans were able to array for their great adventure. Nevertheless this little force gave backbone to the French resistance, and made a fighting retreat which will go down to history as one of the finest feats of warfare. Despite its losses and its weariness, it was ready, when the hour struck, to push forward and play its part in forcing the Germans to withdraw to the Aisne and begin that trench fighting which was the beginning of the end. From the day when the German armies began to dig themselves into defensive positions, victory, however long it might be delayed, was assured to the Allies.

But before that day could dawn, the British nation had to gird up its loins and transform itself into a great military power. Not only had it to raise armies numbered by the million, and to supply its Allies with vast sums of money, but it had to organize its manufacturing power so as to turn out rifles, guns, and shells in almost incredible quantities. Germany, you will remember, had pinned her faith to artillery and machine guns. She and Austria had manufactured more and bigger guns than

* See Nehemiah, ch. iv.

had ever been seen on the battlefield, and had stored up myriads of shells, many of which were filled with high explosives, capable of destroying the strongest fortresses that man could devise. The high-explosive shells fired by these guns turned the strongest Belgian and French fortresses into rubbish heaps in the course of a few days. When trench warfare set in, the guns were used to destroy our earthworks, and to create behind them a barrier of fire through which it was wellnigh impossible for men, munitions, and food to be brought up. For many long and deadly months we could make no adequate reply to the German artillery. How the Allies managed to hold on to their positions in spite of the torrent of fire hurled upon them, still remains one of the mysteries of the war.

When at length the Allies were strong enough to take the offensive, they found themselves face to face with fortified positions which could not be carried by the ordinary methods of attack without terrible loss of life. You remember, I am sure, our offensive at Neuve Chapelle early in March 1915. We won the enemy's first line of trenches and the village, but we were held up by nests of machine guns posted along a little river, and could not carry the ridge which was the object of our attack. The French in Champagne (September 1915) had a similar experience. They carried the enemy's first line, but in spite of all their valour, could make no further headway. At the battle of Loos, in the same month, the Germans' third line of defence defied us. How was it that the Allies failed in all these cases?

The Germans had adopted a new method of defence. All along their third line, like beads strung on a string, they had erected little fortresses defended by many machine guns. These *fortins*, as they are called, were connected by communication trenches, and beneath them, thirty or forty feet deep, the Germans had constructed underground dwellings, to which the defenders could retire while the shells of the attackers were falling thick and fast on their positions. Then, when the fire ceased and the infantry pushed forward, the Germans came up from their subterranean refuges and turned their machine guns upon the advancing foe. The *fortins* were so placed that infantry attempting to pass between them were enfiladed and mown down. The big guns of the Allies might destroy the first two lines of trenches, but in the case of the third line they had to reduce a multitude of small forts, very cunningly placed, before they could make headway.

At Neuve Chapelle, Champagne, and Loos we learned bitter lessons which we laid to heart. We determined to attempt no more offensives in the West on a large scale until we had enough big guns and shells to batter down, one by one, the strongholds that studded the German line. Never again were our brave fellows to find themselves, when within sight of their goal, brought to a halt by unsuspected positions from which machine guns spat unceasing streams of lead upon them. Never again, when ground had been won, must we be forced to give it up again because we had not the means to destroy the enemy batteries that rained death and destruction upon those who held it.

Before we could hope for success we must altogether surpass the enemy in guns and shells. We must transform Great Britain into a vast arsenal, and bend all our energies to the task of turning out an unending stream of munitions of war. No longer was the issue of the great struggle to rest upon the naked valour of our men. The factories and workshops must come to their aid, and provide them with weapons superior in number and power to those of the enemy. The skill, industry, and devotion of our munition workers must be pitted against those of the Central Powers. Upon the forges and lathes of Britain hung the fate of Europe.

Mrs. Humphry Ward, the famous novelist, has told us, in a book of letters * which she wrote for the enlightenment of American friends, how splendidly Britain bent herself to the great task. The history of the world shows nothing like it.

> " In February 1916," she writes, " I was a visitor, by the kindness of the Ministry of Munitions, then in Mr. Lloyd George's hands, to a portion of the munitions field—in the Midlands, on the Tyne, and on the Clyde. At that moment Great Britain, as far as armament was concerned, was in the mid-stream of a gigantic movement which had begun in the summer of 1915, set going by the kindling energy of Mr. Lloyd George, and seconded by the roused strength of a nation which was not the industrial pioneer of the whole modern world for nothing, however keenly others during the last half-century have pressed upon or—in some regions—passed her. Everywhere I found new workshops already filled with workers, a large proportion of them women, already turning out a mass of shell which

---

* *England's Effort* (3rd ed., Aug. 1916).

would have seemed incredible to soldiers and civilians alike during the first months of the war; while the tale of howitzers, trench mortars, machine guns, and the rest was running up week by week, in the vast extensions already added to the other works. But everywhere, too, I saw huge empty workshops, waiting for their machines or just setting them up, and everywhere the air was full of rumours of the new industrial forces—above all, of the armies of women—that were to be brought to bear. New towns were being built for them; their work-places and their tools were being got ready for them. But in many quarters they were not yet there; only one heard, as it were, the tramp of their advancing feet.

"But to-day! [August 1916]. Those great empty workshops that I saw in February in the making or in the furnishing are now full of workers and machines, and thousands like them all over the country."

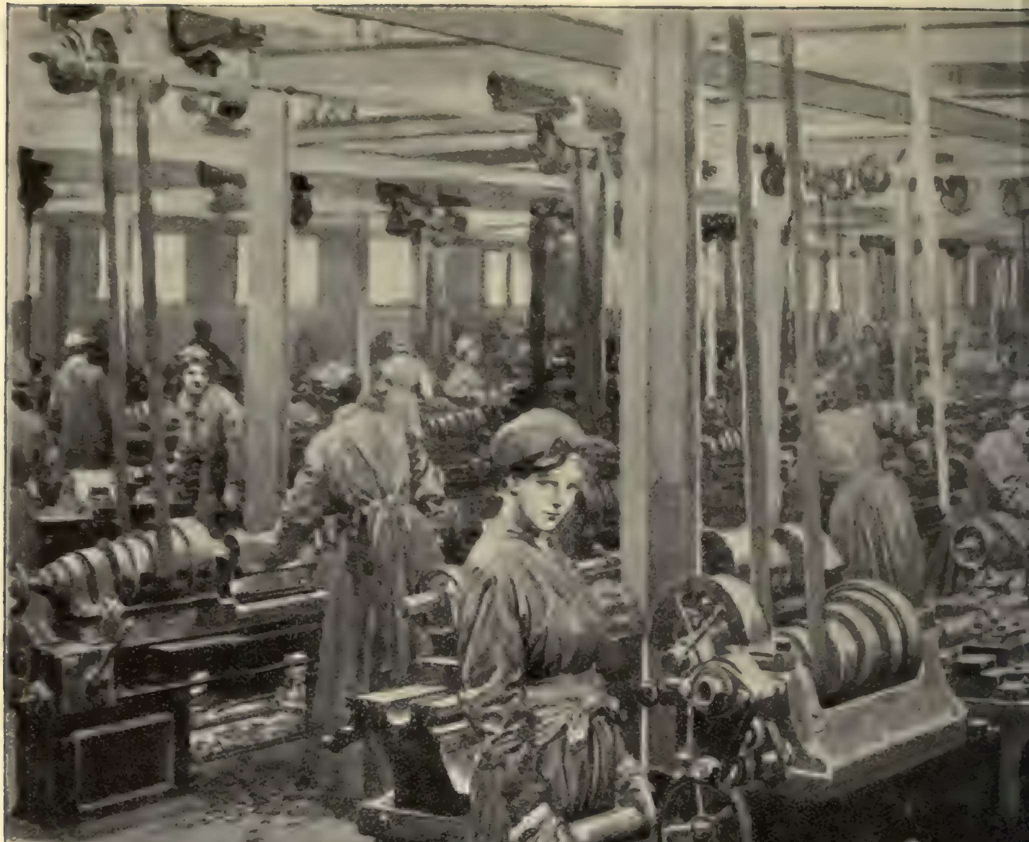
On 15th August the new Minister of Munitions (Mr. Montagu), in the course of a speech in the House of Commons, gave the following account of the output of the old and the new factories. He reminded his hearers that at the beginning of the war we had only the means of supplying ammunition for an army of 200,000 men. "*Every week* now," he said, "we are sending over to France as much as the whole pre-war stock of land service ammunition in the country. . . . *Every month* now we are turning out nearly twice as many big guns as were in existence for land service when the Ministry of Munitions came into being (June 1915). Between June 1915 and June 1916 the monthly output of *heavy guns* has increased *sixfold*, and the present output will soon be doubled. . . . For every hundred 18-pounders turned out in the first ten months of the war, we are now turning out five hundred. . . . We are producing eighteen times as many machine guns. . . . Of rifles—the most difficult of all war material to produce quickly in large quantities—our weekly home production is now three times as great as it was a year ago. We are supplying our army overseas with rifles and machine guns entirely from home sources. . . . Of small-arms ammunition our output is three times as great as a year ago. We are producing sixty-six times as much high explosives as at the beginning of 1915; and our output of bombs is thirty-three times as great as it was last year."

All this we were providing for ourselves. Listen to what we were doing at the same time for our Allies.

"The loss of her northern provinces, absorbed by the German invasion, has deprived France of three-quarters of her steel. We are now sending to France one-third of the whole British production of shell steel. . . . We are also supplying the Allies with the constituents of high explosives in very large quantities, prepared by our national factories. . . . We are sending to the Allies millions of tons of coal and coke every month, large quantities of machinery, and twenty per cent. of our whole machine tools. . . . We are supplying Russia with millions of pairs of army boots."

No Briton could read without feelings of pride Mr. Montagu's amazing account of how we had made up the leeway. It was a complete answer to the Germans and to those of our own people who thought that Britain was a worn-out and enfeebled nation, incapable of a mighty effort. Coupled with the enormous growth of the army, which then exceeded five million men, it clearly proved that the British people were stronger, more determined, and more ready for sacrifice than they had ever been. There were some who doubted whether this gigantic effort could be kept up. The Minister of Munitions had no such doubts. "The output of the factories week by week," he said, "now covers the expenditure in the field." No longer was there any fear that British valour would be rendered unavailing by shortage of gun and shell.

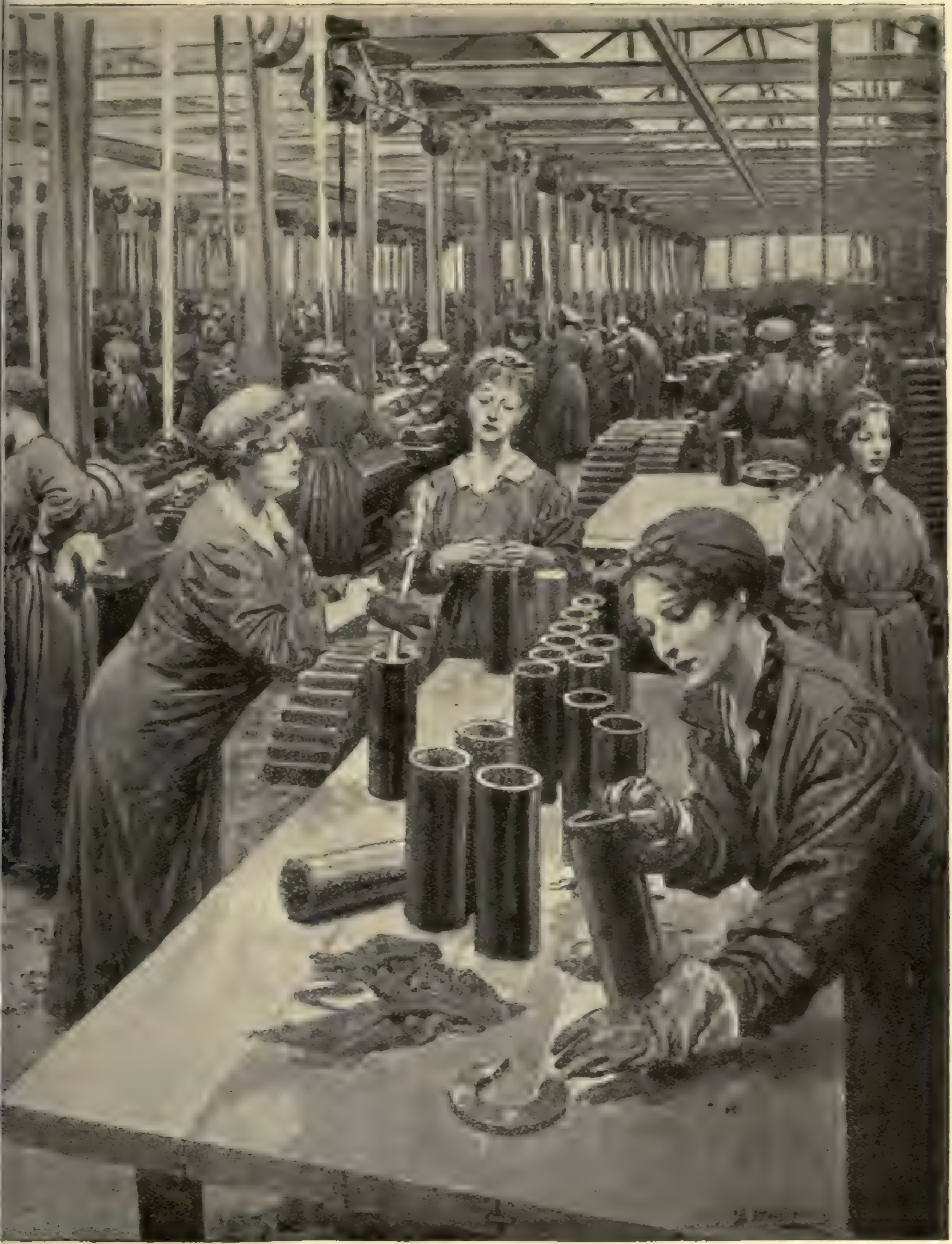
In August some three and a half millions of workers were engaged in the manufacture of munitions. The great majority of the men had done wonderfully. In some places there had been trouble, it is true, but there was no lack of patriotism anywhere. "What's wrong with the men ? " indignantly asked a Glasgow employer. "What was done on the Clyde in the first months of the war should never be forgotten by this country. Working from six to nine every day, till they dropped with fatigue—and Sundays too—drinking just to keep themselves going—too tired to eat or sleep—that's what it was. I saw it ! " But the great and new feature of the workshops was the employment of women, more than 400,000 of whom were engaged in what had never before been considered women's work. It is impossible to overpraise the magnificent service which British women rendered to their country in its day of trial, and nowhere was their patriotic spirit better displayed than in the munition factories. In many cases their output beat that of the men hollow. "They are not so strong as the men," said the superintendent of one of the factories, "but what they lack in strength they make up in patriotic spirit." This common



The New Munition Workers busily engaged

(*From the picture by F. Matania.*

This picture shows one of the big workshops of Messrs. Vickers, Limited, "manned" entirely by hand corner is stretching out her hand for a gauge, which she will run up and down the shining exterior of



in turning out Shells for the British Army.

By permission of The Sphere.)

women. Notice the overalls and mob-caps which are referred to on page 10. The worker in the right-the steel cases in order to make sure that they are neither too small nor too large.

spirit was well expressed by a girl who, before she came to the factory, was working a knitting-machine: "I like this better *—because there's a purpose in it.*"

Mrs. Humphry Ward thus describes the women workers in one of the new factories which she visited :—

> "Often as I have now seen this sight, so new to England, of a great engineering workshop filled with women, it stirs me at the twentieth time little less than it did at first. These girls and women of the Midlands and the North are a young and comely race. Their slight or rounded figures among the forest of machines, the fair or golden hair of so many of them, their grace of movement, bring a strange touch of beauty into a scene which has already its own spell. Ftchers * have shown us what can be done in art with these high workshops, the endless criss-cross of their belting, and their ranged machines. But the coming in of the girls, in their close khaki caps and overalls, showing the many pretty heads and slender necks, and the rows of light bending forms, spaced in order, beside their furnaces or lathes, as far as the eye can reach, has added a new element —something flowerlike—to all this flash of fire and steel, and to the grimness of war underlying it. . . .
>
> "These girls at hot haste are making fuses and cartridge cases by the hundred thousand, casting, pressing, drawing, and—in the special danger-buildings—filling certain parts of the fuse with explosives."

* * * * * * *

Britain was ready—at last! Her long and anxious days of battling with insufficient strength and resources were over. She was now as well organized for war as Germany. Not only had she created such a machine as her foes thought impossible, but the armies of the Allies were now working together and on a prearranged plan. Instead of each of the Powers making offensives at the time that seemed best in its own eyes, all were now prepared to back each other up and work together like a team. No wonder, then, that in the closing days of June the Allies felt that they had entered upon a new phase of the war. The dark days of unpreparedness were over. *Their sun was shining!*

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* Etchers practise the art of etching—that is, scratching a drawing upon a metal plate in such a fashion that, when rubbed over with ink, an impression may be taken from it on paper.

CHAPTER II.

ON THE SOMME.

LET us suppose that one morning early in June 1916 we are permitted to make an aeroplane flight over the British front in Flanders and France. We soar up from the bank of the river Yser, and as we speed southward cast a glance over the stark ruins of Ypres to the seamed meadows and riven woods beyond. We recall, as we fly, the three terrible conflicts and the many smaller struggles which have made this blood-sodden salient of Ypres the most famous battle-ground of all our history.

Southward we proceed over the ravaged country, and look down upon the trenches from which friend and foe have watched each other for so many dreary months. From our lofty eyrie the opposing lines seem to be in much the same position as they were at the close of the year 1914. St. Eloi, Messines, Neuve Église, Plugstreet Woods, places of no account before the war, but now immortalized by British valour and doggedness, lie beneath us. Ahead are the serpent-like windings of the river Lys. We flash over the roofs and chimneys of Armentières, and cross that bedraggled region of mean villages and pit mounds in which every huddle of ruins has its tale of undying heroism and glorious sacrifice. The names of Neuve Chapelle and Festubert are written on the pages of history in letters that can never fade.

Onward we go, and see beneath us the murky waters of the La Bassée Canal, to the north and south of which so many gallant Britons freely sacrificed themselves to stay the progress of the enemy in the days of his almost overwhelming might. Thousands of bright young lives have been laid down upon the brickfields and slag-heaps which lie beneath us. Now we are over the rolling country in which we strove valiantly but vainly to break through the enemy's lines in September 1915. Still further south is the region in which the French carried, at a terrible cost, some of the strongest positions ever created by man. The shot-riven towers of Arras, the most furiously bombarded of all French cities, now appear. We have reached the point which was the southernmost limit of the British line up to the month of March 1915. When the Germans were beginning their great attack on Verdun, we took over that part of their line which stretched from Loos to the Somme.

* * * * * * *

We have now arrived in the region to which, on July 1, 1916, all eyes were turned, and on which for many a month afterwards the great interest of the war centred. Before we can follow intelligently the progress of the "Great Push," now about to begin, we must diligently study the map on page 15. Fix your attention in the first place on the town of Albert, which prior to the war was a busy little manufacturing place. In the town and the neighbourhood there was very desperate fighting during the race to the sea. From Albert the country over which the British "Great Push" was to take place spreads out like a fan.

You notice that the little river Ancre flows through Albert. Close to the town it forms a pretty double cascade, about fifty feet high. From this fact you will gather that the river is not navigable. It is only a small tributary of the Somme, and is easily crossed by road and railway; it is, therefore, not a serious obstacle for a modern army. It rises in the chalk hills about four miles south of Bapaume,* and curves round in a semicircle to pass through Arras on its way to the river Somme, which it joins about ten miles east of Amiens.

Now look to the south of Albert and notice the Somme, the main river of the region. It rises not far from St. Quentin, which figured, you will remember, in the retreat from Mons. Flowing to the south-west, it turns northward to Péronne, swings westward, and then north-westward to enter the English Channel after a course of about one hundred and twenty miles. Much of its valley is marshy, and all the way from its source to the sea it is canalized. In some places the

* *Bä-pome'.*

canal runs by the side of the river; in other places the river itself is used. The Somme thus forms an important water highway for North France; and its barge traffic is very considerable, for it is connected by canal with the Oise and the Scheldt. The river used to be considered the northern line of defence for Paris, and the chief towns of its valley, Ham, Péronne, Amiens, and Abbeville, are all fortified.

Most British boys and girls have read of the Somme in their history books. During the Hundred Years' War with France British armies frequently landed at the mouth of the river. Edward III., in 1346, made a stand against a superior French army at Crécy, a few miles north of the Somme, near Abbeville, and, thanks to the prowess of his archers, won a splendid victory. In 1415 King Harry repeated his great-grandfather's exploit at Agincourt, which is not far from Crécy.

The whole of the basin of the Somme belongs to the old French province of Picardy. In early times the Picards were famous for their love of independence and for their encouragement of art and learning. Their towns were wealthy and their lands were well tilled. They themselves were excellent if somewhat boastful soldiers. At the time when the "Great Push" began all Picardy east of our lines in front of Albert was in the hands of the Germans.

Let us now fix our attention on that part of the Somme shown in our map. You notice that the river runs northward to Péronne, and then swings round to the west on its journey to the sea. Péronne * is a very interesting little town with a long history. King Charles the Simple † was imprisoned by the Normans in its castle from 923 to 929, and the cell in which he languished and died is still shown. Charles the Bold ‡ captured the town in 1465, and three years later seized and shut up Louis XI. § in the castle until he was ready to make a treaty with his captor. This treaty was so greatly to the

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* *Pay-ron* (*n*, nasal).

† *Charles III.*, King of France (879–929). During his reign the Northmen under Rolf the Ganger wrested the lower valley of the Seine (Normandy) from him.

‡ *Charles*, Duke of Burgundy (1433–77), fought long and fiercely against Louis XI., captured towns on the Somme, forced Louis to make terms with him, and met his death before the walls of Nancy.

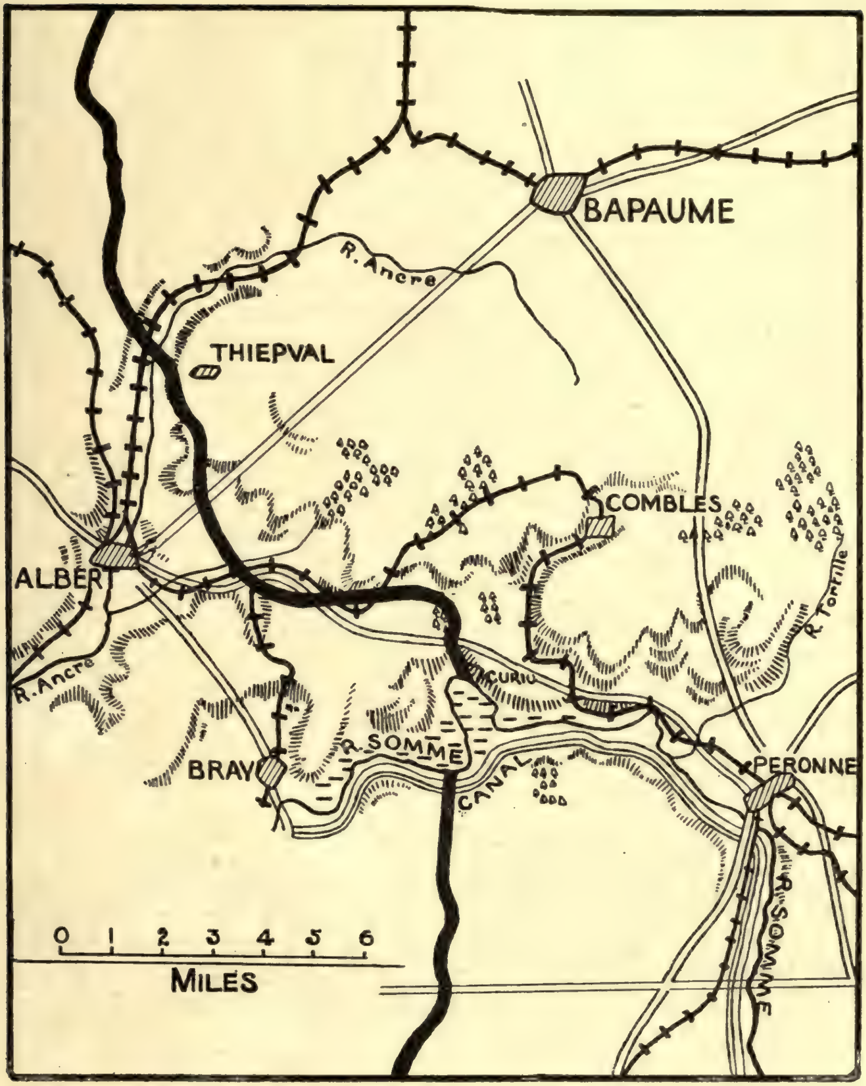
§ *Louis XI.* (1423–83), King of France, restored France after the Hundred Years' War, and firmly established his government.

disadvantage of France that Louis's subjects taught their jays and magpies to repeat words of scorn against the king. The fortress of Péronne was never captured down to the year 1815, when the Duke of Wellington broke the spell. In 1870 it yielded to the Germans, and again in 1914 it fell into their hands. The two chief buildings in the place are the Church of St. Jean and the castle, with its four heavy towers. Péronne is now an important centre for making sugar from the beetroot which is grown largely in the neighbourhood.

The story of Péronne, in common with that of all Picardy, is rich in instances of heroism on the part of the women, who frequently saved the castle from capture. We are told that one, Marie Fauré, inspired the townsfolk to hold out for many months when the place was besieged by the Duke of Nassau. He was reproached for being so long in capturing what was described as "only a dovecot." "A dovecot, true," he replied; "but the pigeons inside are very difficult to catch, for the female birds are as courageous as the male."

If you look closely at the map, you will see that between Péronne and Bray the Somme makes almost as many loops and bends as the Forth near Stirling. The river itself is so narrow that it would not give an army much trouble to cross. The map, however, shows you that it flows through marshy country, and is flanked on both sides by ponds and bogs, and also that a canal runs to the southward of it. The triple obstacle formed by the canal, the river, and the marshes was the dividing line between the French sphere and the British sphere when the "Great Push" began. The British were to work eastward and northward from their line, which extended from the Ancre to the Somme; while the French, further south, were to push towards Péronne, in the angle of the Somme.

Why did the Allies choose this part of their front for their great effort? If they could capture Péronne, they would hold the key to the Upper Somme valley, and would be in an excellent position to push over the watershed that separates the valleys of the Somme and Oise from those of the Scheldt and Sambre. Once the Allies were firmly established in the basin of the Scheldt the Germans on the Aisne would be taken in the rear, and would either have to retire to the line of the Meuse or suffer destruction. Further, the Allies would by this time have turned the flank of the whole German line running to



Map to illustrate the Region of the "Big Push."

the North Sea. The result would be that the enemy would have to give up Belgium and all but a small fraction of France.

Such a happy issue was, however, far in the future. For the present the Allies had quite another aim. You must remember that when the great offensive on the Somme began the Central Powers were resisting or attacking fiercely at five other places—at Verdun, in the Trentino, on the Carpathian slopes, and on two sections of the Russian front farther north. The immediate object of the attack on the Somme was to embarrass the enemy by falling upon him at a fresh point while he was deeply engaged elsewhere, and leaving him in doubt as to where exactly he should throw his rapidly dwindling reserves of men. Everywhere he could now be met with greater numbers than his own, and with a greater force of guns and shells than he could command. At every place heavy losses could be inflicted on him, and it was hoped that when the process had been carried far enough his line would " crumble," and the day of his downfall would dawn.

There were some who said, " This new offensive on the Somme is Verdun all over again. The Germans failed at Verdun ; why should we succeed on the Somme ? " Let me point out to you that there was a very wide difference between the two offensives. The Verdun offensive was undertaken *against* a salient, and as it proceeded the French line grew flatter and shorter, and therefore became easier to hold. The Somme offensive, if successful, would have the very opposite effect. It was undertaken *from within* a salient, and every mile that the Allies pushed forward meant that the German lines had to grow longer and longer, and therefore become more and more difficult to hold.

The Verdun offensive was the last big effort possible to the Germans before the tide turned and the Allies became their superiors in men and munitions. The Somme offensive, as you know, was undertaken at the moment when Britain had completed her long months of preparation, and was for the first time in a position to throw her full weight of man, gun, and shell into the scale.

CHAPTER III.

THE "GREAT PUSH" BEGINS.

YOU are, no doubt, eager to get to the actual fighting; but you must not grudge me a few more minutes in which to give you some clear ideas about the district which was soon to be the most famous battlefield of all the world. The district is known as the Santerre *—a word which may mean the healthy land, or the cleared land, or the holy land. It deserves the name of holy land, not only because it is thickly dotted with ancient churches, but because St. Ansgarius, the apostle of Christianity in Denmark and Sweden, was a Picard †; and so, too, was Peter the Hermit, who preached the First Crusade. Some say that the name means the land of blood, because from early days the district has been the scene of many battles. If Santerre did not mean a land of blood in former times, it certainly does now.

If you had visited the Santerre in the early part of the year 1914, you would have found yourself in a pleasant land of rolling chalk hills, dotted with villages and small towns and crossed by many little streams. You would have seen few farmhouses, for the tillers of the soil in this part of Picardy live together in little towns and villages, from which they go forth to their labours in the morning, and to which they return in the evening. You would have seen many patches of wood, but no hedges, and indeed few trees, until you had reached the higher ground, from which your eye would have followed the long lines of tall poplars flanking the Roman highroads which cross the district. I have already told you something of the two chief rivers—the Somme, winding in a broad valley, sometimes between chalk cliffs, and sometimes spreading out

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* *San-tare.*

† A native of Picardy.

The Wiltshires on their Way to the Firing Line. [*Official photograph.*

into lakes or marshes ; and the Ancre, which resembles a Wiltshire trout stream.

" On a hot midsummer day the slopes of the hills are ablaze with yellow mustard, red poppies, and blue cornflowers ; and to one coming from the lush flats of Flanders, or the ' black country ' of the Pas de Calais, or the dreary levels of Champagne, or the strange, melancholy Verdun hills, this land wears a habitable, cheerful air, as if remote from the oppression of war."

The whole land rises in a series of gentle ridges to an upland which forms the skyline and runs very nearly due east and west from the neighbourhood of Pozières,* on the Albert-Bapaume road, to Sailly,† on the Péronne-Bapaume road. The ridge is not of uniform height—it rises and falls in dents and valleys. Nor is it lofty—nowhere is it more than 500 feet above the level of the sea. In the course of a summer afternoon you could easily stroll from the original German line (see map, page 15) to the highest part of the ridge, and you would not have done any real climbing in the course of your walk. But if you started from Albert you would have to go up and down a good deal before you stood on the highest part of the ridge. Sometimes you would descend into shallow valleys and sometimes into deep valleys, but nowhere would you find the slopes really steep.

When you reached the " High Wood," you would be on the watershed which separates the basin of the Somme from that of the Scarpe, which is connected by canal with the Scheldt, and you would be able to look over a wide stretch of country towards and beyond Bapaume.

In the great assault which I am about to describe our object was to gain this watershed. Ever since the trench warfare began it had been our fate to lie on the lower ground, and to have to fight our way up. The Germans on the high ground had always a great advantage over us. Their artillery observers could overlook our positions and direct the fire of their guns upon us. If we could reach the ridge of which I have been speaking, this great advantage would pass to us. We should command the whole country for miles around.

The Germans had long expected an attack in this region, and had diligently prepared to meet it. For many months they

* *Po-ze-air.*

† *Sigh-ye.*

had been almost undisturbed, and their engineers had constructed a very strong and very elaborate system of defences. The villages facing our line had been turned into fortresses, and had been linked together by communication trenches. In the soft white chalk deep dug-outs had been excavated, and in these machine gunners could take refuge when our shelling was hot. Each village provided a flank defence for its neighbour. To try to rush these villages would be the height of folly, for the moment our guns lifted in order that our soldiers might advance, the machine gunners would bring up their weapons from the dug-outs and would pour a shattering fire upon them, not only in front, but in flank, and even from the rear. The Germans had been at work on this system of fortifications for twenty months, and had made it so strong that they were justified in believing it to be impregnable.

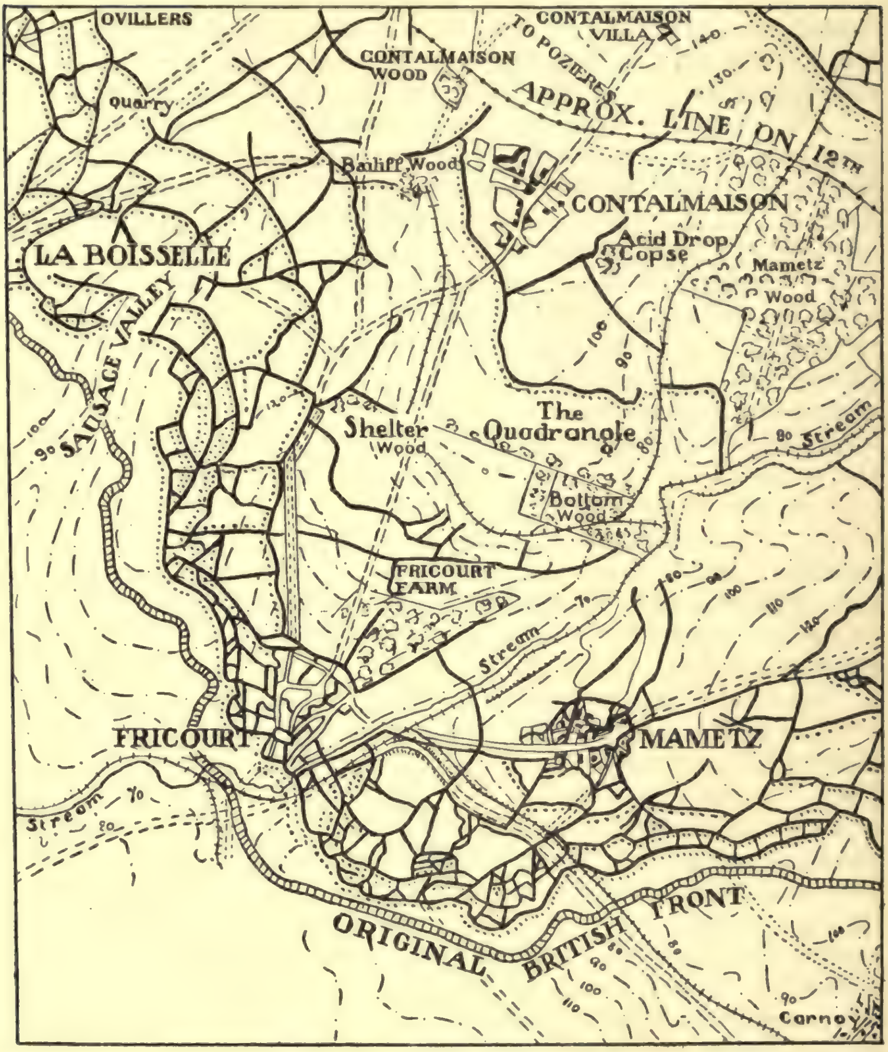
Our generals were not going to follow the plan which had failed at Neuve Chapelle, in Champagne, and at Loos. They had now myriads of guns and an enormous supply of shells, and the factories of Britain could supply all their needs. They meant to use their gun power to destroy the German fortifications, and they did not intend to send infantry against any positions until they had been so wrecked that they were incapable of real defence. Of course it was impossible for the guns to destroy dug-outs thirty or forty feet below ground, but the works overhead might be so battered that they would afford little cover for the machine gunners when they came up from below. Further, it was thought that the Germans in the dug-outs would be so shaken by our bombardment that they would be unable to offer much resistance. In this way it was hoped that positions would be won and many Germans would be killed without a great loss of life on the part of the attackers.

There is no doubt that the Germans grew very uneasy as the day for opening the assault drew near. They had by this time no large reserves of men. The wounded who had recovered and the young recruits of the 1917 class were all needed to fill up the gaps in the ranks of the divisions already in action, and they could not, as in the past, hold in readiness masses of men behind the line, to be hurried to any point which was in danger. Most of the reserves had been sucked into the whirlpool at Verdun, or sent East to von Hindenburg. Beyond the local reserves, the Germans could only obtain reinforcements by "milking the line"—that is, by taking a battalion from this section and another from that. In order to strengthen the line at one point they had to thin it at another.

The Germans were holding a huge salient, roughly in the form of a right-angled triangle, one arm of which extended from the North Sea to Soissons, and the other arm from Soissons to Verdun. If a wedge could be driven into one arm of this triangle, the apex would be in deadly peril. Perhaps you will say, "Surely the Germans could retire, as the Russians did when the salient around Warsaw was pierced." But you must remember that in the East the armies had all along been moving to and fro, and had nowhere settled down into deep trenches and strong fortifications. In the West the Germans had made their line as strong as though they meant to occupy it until the crack of doom. The very strength of the German front was its weakness. A breach made in a line of men always ready to move either forward or to the rear can readily be mended; but a breach in a line of strong fortifications in which men have put their entire trust, and in which they have settled down for many months, means disaster, especially when the reserves are few and far between.

Had the Germans been wise they would have fallen back in June to a line which they could have held strongly with their lessened number of men. It is said that soon after the "Great Push" began the German High Command actually began to make preparations for such a retirement, and that the colonels were warned to be ready to withdraw when the word was given. Had such a course been taken it would have been unfortunate for the Allies. Happily for us, the Germans discovered that retreat was impossible without the risk of a great disaster. You remember how the German people were told that they had won a glorious victory at the Battle of Jutland on 31st May. In the face of the loud and foolish boasting in which the Kaiser and his friends then indulged, they dared not suggest a withdrawal from the Somme. Had the command been given to retire, the German people would have had their eyes opened to the real state of things, and all their confidence would have melted into thin air. So the German High Command was obliged to hold on in a dangerous position, and trust to a miracle to save it.

But though the Germans were in peril, we must not forget



that they were so strongly posted that nothing but a terrible onslaught of artillery would shift them. Soon after the "Great Push" began, our War Office published a map of the German trenches opposite to us. Anything more complex you can scarcely imagine. Look at this map, which shows you the trench system between Ovillers [*] and Mametz,[†] and judge for yourself. All along the line you see a perfect maze of trenches—for firing, for supports, and for reserves. All were connected, and all had the deep dug-outs of which I have spoken. Behind the first maze of trenches there was a line, not so strong, which covered the field batteries; and some distance in the rear of the guns there was a second system, almost as strong as the first. In the rear were fortified villages and woods. Everywhere there was a network of railways, by means of which munitions and supplies could readily be brought up. Before the Allies could drive a wedge into this part of the German front heroic work would have to be done.

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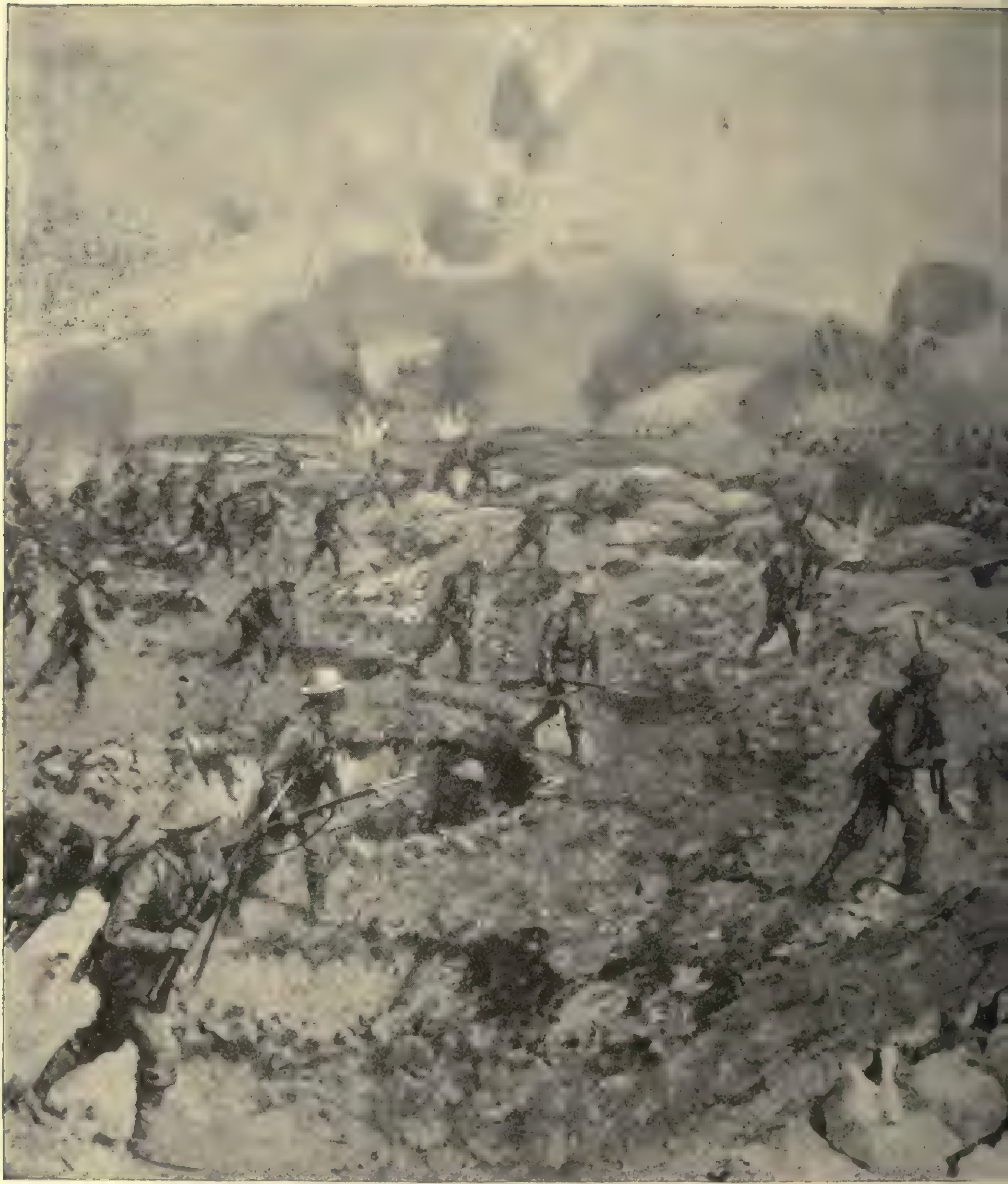
[*] *O-ve-lair.*

[†] *Ma-metz.*

In the first chapter of this volume I told you how Britain prepared for her formidable task. The six divisions with which she began the war had now grown to some seventy divisions in the field, not counting the troops from the Dominions or from India, or the masses of trained men who were held in reserve and were sufficient to make up the wastage for a whole year. None other of the fighting nations, except perhaps France, had called to the colours so large a proportion of its men. Our supply and transport, our medical services, and our aircraft work won the unstinted admiration of our Allies; and our gunnery was praised by the French, who are, as you know, a nation of expert gunners. Though our armies were composed of men who until they were called up for service knew nothing of soldiering, they were the flower of the manhood of the nation, and never before had Britain sent men of such intelligence and devotion to fight her battles. You already know that in the supply of guns and munitions we were now the superior of the enemy. We were ready in all respects to put our fortunes to the test.

* * * * * * *

About the middle of June we began a great bombardment all along the ninety miles of line from the Yser to the Somme. While the bombardment was proceeding our men made raids on various parts of the line, the object being to mislead the enemy and make him uncertain as to where the great blow was to fall. In these raids we sometimes used gas; at other times we subjected the trenches in a particular section to a short, sharp bombardment. Then a picked body of men dashed across the No Man's Land, cut the enemy's wire, leaped into their trenches, and dragged out and took back with them a score or more of prisoners. In order to illustrate the manner



British Troops advancing over the German Trenches

(From the picture by A. Forestier. By permission

The men advanced in "waves." In the above illustration the first wave has passed the first line of
In the foreground is seen the German first-line trench with plank platforms thrown across in various places.
parapet, and in various other ways making the trench capable of defence. In this manner the ground

at the beginning of the "Great Push."

of The Illustrated London News.)

German trenches, and is charging home on the second line (in the background) with bayonet and grenade. Working parties are busy with pick and shovel making the old parados (back of the trench) the new was won, step by step.

in which these "cutting-out expeditions" were conducted, let me describe how a company of the Highland Light Infantry made a raid near the Vermelles-La Bassée road. During the day our guns had made havoc of the German parapets, and when night fell a working party of the enemy was sent up to mend them. While the engineers were busy the Scots managed to cut off a section of the German trenches. Then they swooped down on them, flung bombs into the dug-outs, killed forty Germans, seized forty-six prisoners, and triumphantly returned to their own lines with only two men slightly wounded.

Two Anzac raids near Armentières—the one against Prussian, the other against Saxon troops—took place on the night of 25th–26th June. About half an hour after midnight our trench mortars began a furious bombardment. Before long the enemy's wire was broken, and his trenches were almost smothered by a hail of bombs. At the same time big guns shelled the communication trenches to prevent the enemy from sending up reinforcements. Then, "Over the parapet!" was the order, and away went a picked body of Anzacs across the No Man's Land. They sprang into the trenches, and a deadly scuffle began with bayonet, rifle-butt, and grenade. Many Germans surrendered; but they were too terrified to cross the zone of fire to the Anzac trenches, and had to be hauled along by main force. One huge Queenslander was seen dragging a Hun after him like a sack of potatoes. As he flung the man into his trench he shouted to an officer who had made a sporting bet on the event, "I've won that five francs, sir!"

The Royal Munsters, of whom you have already heard more than once in these pages, had a little affair of their own about the same time. When, however, they reached the enemy's trenches, they discovered that their foes were made of sterner stuff. But the Irishmen bombed and bludgeoned with such zest that they soon put an end to resistance—not, however, before they had suffered several casualties. You will not be surprised to learn that the weapon which the Irishmen wielded most effectively in the trenches was a kind of shillelagh. Later on I shall tell you how Lieutenant A. H. Batten-Pooll, who commanded the party, won the Victoria Cross for the splendid spirit which he displayed on this occasion.

During those days of bombardment our airmen were very busy. They fought many fights, and were so successful that before long the German aeroplanes were driven down and their kite balloons were destroyed. While scarcely a single enemy aeroplane dared venture across our lines, our flying men made voyages far into the enemy's country, spying out his arrangements and destroying his stores and railway lines. All through the "Great Push" we had the mastery of the air; and this was of the utmost advantage, for it enabled us to make our preparations in secrecy.

On Saturday, 24th June, Sir Douglas Haig announced in his dispatch: "To-day our artillery has been more active than usual along the whole front." The next day it was still more active, and from Ypres down to Fricourt * there was no part of the enemy's line which was not deluged with shells. Day by day the fire grew hotter, and by the 28th our airmen looked down on long lines of German trenches which seemed to be utterly destroyed. The rows of green-gray sandbags were broken almost everywhere; villages behind the line had become rubbish heaps, and leafy woods a few stark, broken tree trunks. At night the whole eastern sky was lighted up by what seemed to be fitful summer lightning; but observers noticed that there was by no means as much noise as might have been expected. A score of miles behind the firing line there was a long, loud roar, but nearer the guns the sound was muffled.†

All the last week of June shells were falling fast and thick and without pause on the German line. At one place between the Ancre and the Somme it was estimated that five hundred shells fell every half-hour over a single village. In some places they burst amidst the enemy in their billets or in their rest camps, destroyed their batteries, blew up their ammunition dumps, and swept the ground behind the trenches so fiercely

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* *Free-koor*, village about three miles to the east of Albert.

† Since the beginning of the war observations had been made in Holland as to the distance at which firing could be heard. During the Battle of the Dogger Bank the firing was heard at about 123 miles distance; during the bombardment of Antwerp, at about 144 miles distance; and yet at places much nearer the scene of combat the sound of the firing could not be heard. A Dutch scientist has studied this question, and he tells us that in some cases there is a silent zone, the farthest boundary of which is usually about a hundred miles from the source of the sound, and that when this silent zone is passed there comes an area in which the sounds can again be heard. He thinks that the silent regions may be accounted for by variations in the velocity of the wind, and by changes in the atmosphere at great heights.

that no food or water could be sent up for days at a time. During the last week of June the sky was gray and cloudy, and a thick mist hovered above the uplands, making air observation very difficult. Heavy showers of rain fell, and the roads were deep in mire.

I have described many terrible bombardments in these pages, but the fire of the British guns on the eve of the "Great Push" out-Heroded them all. A French journalist wrote as follows on 29th June:—

> "During the last twenty-four hours the bombardment by the British, in spite of bad weather, has increased in violence all along the front, its intensity on certain points being frightful. The roar of the cannonading is uninterrupted, causing the earth to tremble far away from the scene of action. Shell follows shell at only a few seconds' interval. Not only have the first-line trenches been completely wrecked over a considerable extent, and some entirely wiped out, but the British artillery has reached the second and third line of the enemy's defences. Two munition depots, both five miles to the rear, have been blown up; the prisoners who have been taken wear a dazed and bewildered expression."

The cannonading was heard in Amiens, in Calais, and in Paris itself; and in the calm of those summer nights men and women on the southern cliffs and hillsides of England listened to the far-off roll of thunder that told them the "Great Push" was already in progress, and that the munition workers of Britain had played their part nobly.

On the last afternoon of June the weather suddenly changed. The mists cleared, the clouds departed, and the sun shone out from a sky of blue. All that day there was great activity behind the British lines, especially at Bray, where a whole division was waiting to move forward to the firing line. Munitions were being brought up in vast quantities, and the dumps were being shifted nearer and nearer to the firing line. Then the troops began moving off—Royal Welsh Fusiliers, Buffs, Bedfords, Suffolks, Lancashire Fusiliers, Royal Fusiliers, Hampshires, London Scottish, East Yorkshires, and Manchesters—all in their steel helmets and full fighting kit, all as keen as mustard for the work before them.

The 1st of July dawned hot and cloudless, though a thin fog still clung to the hollows. Let us suppose that you are on a church tower in Albert at about 6.30 in the early morning. What do you see? All along the Allied front, a couple of miles behind the line, are captive balloons, which our soldiers call "sausages." They glitter in the sun, and in every one of them there is an observer watching the shells as they fall on the German lines, and telephoning instructions to the batteries down below.

Every gun for twenty-five miles along the front is roaring. For a week they have been hurling their shells without pause, and during that time more ammunition has been expended than was actually *made* in Britain during the first eleven months of the war. Still, there seems to be no stint of shells. As they fall, great fountains of dust spring up on the opposite slopes; wreaths of smoke hang in the air, and slowly melt into the morning mist. You hear the deep roar of the 9.2-inch howitzers as they fling their huge shells on the dug-outs of the Germans miles away. You hear the sharp crack of the field guns, and the bark of the Canadian 60-pounders throwing shrapnel over the opposite trenches.

"I do not know," wrote Mr. Philip Gibbs, "how many batteries we have along this battle-line, or along the section of the line which I can see; but the guns seem crowded in vast numbers, and their fire is terrific in its intensity. For a time I could see nothing through the low-lying mist and heavy smoke clouds which mingled with the mist, and stood like a blinded man, only listening. It was a wonderful thing that came to my ears. Shells were rushing through the air as though all the trains in the world had leaped their rails and were driving at express speed through endless tunnels, in which they met each other with frightful collisions. Some of these shells, fired from batteries not far from where I stood, ripped the sky with a high, tearing note. Other shells whistled with that strange, gobbling, hissing cry which makes one turn cold. Through the mist and the smoke there came sharp, loud knocks, as separate batteries fired salvos, and great clanging strokes, as of iron doors banged suddenly, and the tattoo of the light field guns playing the drums of death.

"The mist was shifting and dissolving. The tall tower of Albert Cathedral appeared suddenly through the veil, and the sun shone for a few seconds on the Golden Virgin and the Babe which she held head downwards above all this tumult as a peace offering to men. The broken roofs of the town gleamed white, and the two tall chimneys to the left stood black and sharp against the pale blue of the sky, into which dirty smoke drifted above the whiter clouds.

"I could see now as well as hear. I could see our shells falling upon the German lines by Thiepval* and La Boisselle,† and further by Mametz, and southwards over Fricourt. High explosives were tossing up great vomits of black smoke and earth all along the ridges. Shrapnel was pour-

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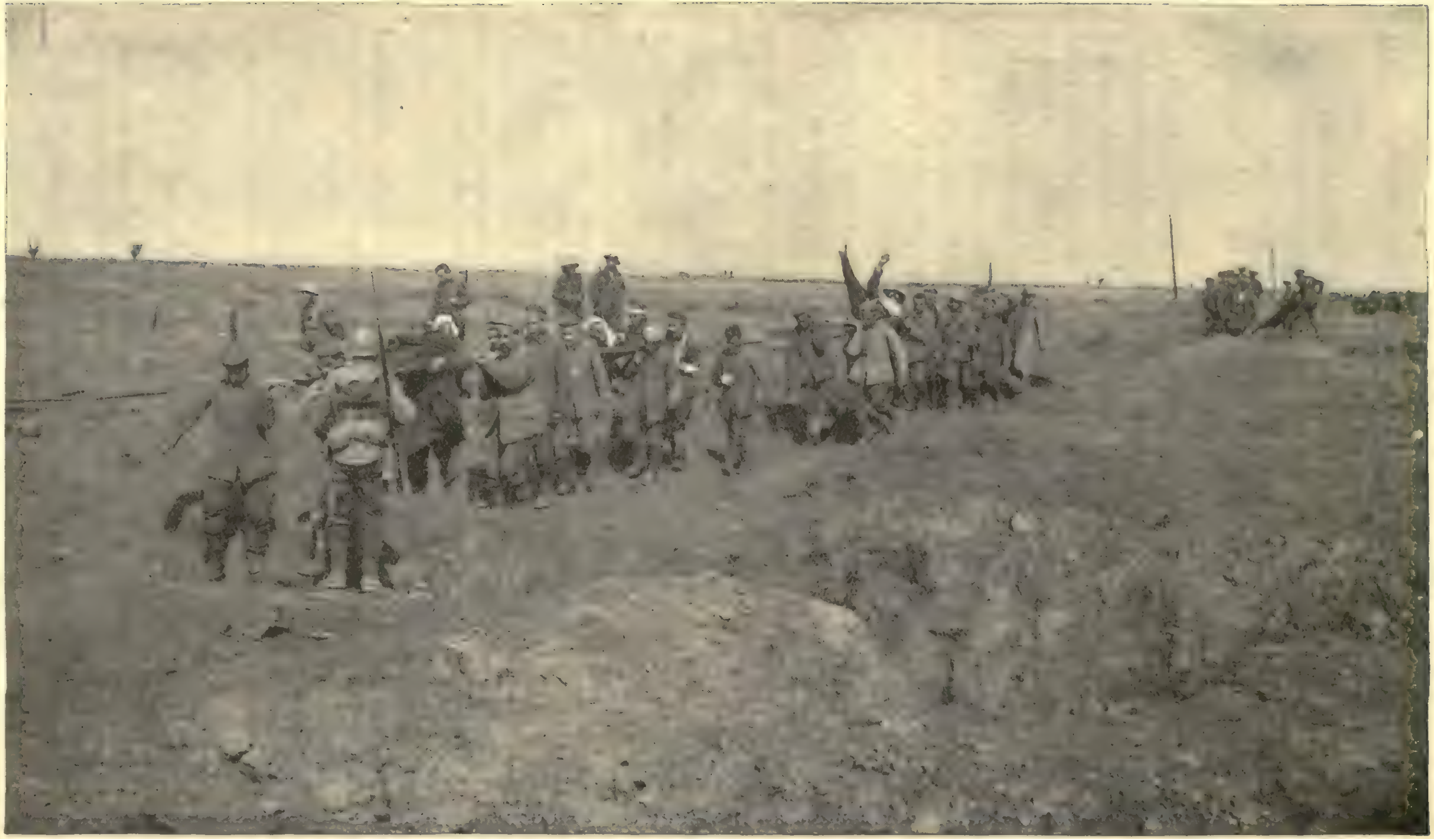
* *Te-ape-val.*

† *La Bwa-zel*, village about 2½ miles south of Thiepval.



British Wounded and German Prisoners returning from the Firing Line. [*Official Photograph.*

Some of the prisoners are helping to carry in our wounded men. One of our wounded, you will observe, is signalling with arm and leg to the photographer.

ing upon these places, and leaving curling white clouds, which clung to the ground. Below, there was the flash of many batteries like Morse Code signalling by stabs of flame. The enemy was being blasted by a hurricane of fire."

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It is now a quarter-past seven, and suddenly the roar of the guns grows fiercer than ever. Spouts of earth leap up from the slopes as though ocean rollers were dashing against a breakwater when the tide runs high and the wind blows in from the sea. Surely, you say to yourself, no man can possibly remain alive in yonder trenches! Then, as you gaze, the roar becomes louder than ever, and the new trench mortars add a fresh note to the thunder as they hurl their "plum puddings" on the enemy's wire. The officers in the trenches glance at their watches. Just before the hands point to half-past seven you hear the loudest roar of all. A mine packed with tons of the highest explosives has been touched off near La Boisselle,* and a party of Royal Engineers is rushing forward to turn the crater into a defensive position. Now the watches show the moment of 7.30. There is a sudden lull in the uproar. The guns, having lifted their sights and lengthened their fuses, begin to roar again. But in that brief interval the great moment has come. Our men are over the parapets.

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Look at the map on page 15, and follow the thick black line which shows you the German first position in the early morning of 1st July. About seven miles north of Thiepval is the village of Gommecourt.† The original German position ran in front of this village southward to the Ancre. From the point where it crossed the Ancre it continued southward in front of the very strongly fortified village of Thiepval; then crossing the Albert-Bapaume road, it curled round the woodland village of Fricourt, and, turning sharply eastward, covered the village of Mametz. Near Hardecourt it turned south again, and, passing in front of Curlu, touched a crook of the Somme.

The Germans believed that we should make our attack between Arras and Albert, and in this part of the line they were fully prepared to meet us. South of Albert, as we shall see later, they were caught napping. The story of the first day's fighting, therefore, divides itself into two parts—(*a*) the attack

* See picture, p. 35.

† *Gum-koor.*

from Gommecourt to Albert, and (*b*) that from Albert to the Somme. In the northern section, from Gommecourt to Albert, we failed ; in the southern section we succeeded brilliantly. Let me tell you first the story of our failure.

While our men in the first section of the line were waiting the order to advance, the Germans bombarded their trenches with high explosives, and in many places wiped them out. The result was that our men could not form up for the attack in the shelter of the trenches, but had to do so on the open ground behind, where they were heavily shelled with shrapnel. As they moved forward the guns followed them, and the men dropped fast. Most of the casualties during the first phase of the attack took place between Gommecourt and Thiepval.

When our men began to cross No Man's Land, the Germans came up out of their underground refuges and manned their ruined parapets with machine guns and automatic rifles. Some of them pushed forward into the cavities of the torn and tumbled ground and enfiladed our men as they advanced. Nevertheless our brave fellows marched forward, line after line, as if on parade. Under that deadly hail of fire not a man wavered or broke rank. But moment by moment their lines thinned as bullets whistled and shrapnel and high-explosive shells burst amongst them. In that zone of death even the most valorous of men could make no headway. Here and there a few of our gallant fellows managed to break into the enemy's trenches, and some got well behind them ; but they were too few to hold their gains, and by evening, from Gommecourt to Thiepval, we had been checked, and the remnant of those who moved out so bravely in the morning were back again in their old positions.

CHAPTER IV.

SOLDIERS' STORIES OF THE "GREAT PUSH."

THE stories which I shall tell you in this chapter were related by men who took part in the heavy and unsuccessful fighting of 1st July between Gommecourt and Thiepval. Units from nearly every English, Scottish, and Irish regiment were engaged, as well as a gallant little company of Rhodesians. A splendid battalion of Newfoundlanders also appeared in the firing line. These men from Britain's oldest colony had weathered many a storm on the "Grand Banks," but never such a storm as that which assailed them on the slopes of Beaumont.* What Ypres means to the Canadians and Anzac to the Australians and New Zealanders, Beaumont now means to the Newfoundlanders.

Over and over again the German lines were pierced; at one place fragments of two battalions pushed forward for 2,000 yards, and north of Thiepval some of our troops passed the crest of the first ridge, and reached a point in the rear of the German position. Somewhere south-east of Hébuterne † one hundred men of a Lancashire battalion actually succeeded in fighting their way into a village beyond the enemy's third line. But, as I have already told you, they were in a death-trap. Machine guns belched death at them from all directions, and those who survived were forced to withdraw to their old positions. In the case of the Lancashire battalion there were no survivors—not one of them was seen again. But the failure in this part of the line was the price paid for success elsewhere. In the next chapter you will learn that while our men were sacrificing themselves between Gommecourt and Thiepval, their comrades to the south were making glorious headway. Not in vain did the heroes who struggled in the northern section shed their blood that day.

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* *Bo-mon* (*n* nasal). See map, p. 45.

† *Ay-boo-tern.*

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In Chapter III., p. 31, I told you that just as the men were ready to scramble over the parapets their ears were assailed by the terrific roar of a mine which was exploded near La Boisselle.

"It reminded me," said a sergeant, "of the pictures you sometimes see in cinemas of petroleum stores blowing up in America. The exploding chamber was as big as a picture palace, and the long gallery was an awful length. It took us seven months to construct. Of course we used to be working under some of the crack Lancashire miners. Every time a fresh fatigue party came up they'd say to the miners, 'Ain't your blooming grotto ever going up?' But it went up all right on 1st July. It was the sight of your life. Half the village got a rise; the air was full of stuff—wagons, wheels, horses, tins, boxes, and Germans. It was seven months well spent getting that mine ready. I believe some of the pieces are coming down now!"

* * * * * * *

A correspondent thus described the glorious steadiness and discipline of our men as they marched forward, line after line, through the zone of fire:—

"There were no stragglers—none. Soldiers will know what that means. And never, perhaps, have men been put to a severer test than to advance, as battalion after battalion had to do, through shells bursting so thickly that they made almost a solid wall. To those watching from behind it seemed that whole waves of men disappeared behind a bank of smoke and tossing earth, while beyond, the ground was swept with machine-gun and rifle fire from, it might be, only fifty yards away. Yet one after another, wave following wave, our men went through it without one faltering. It might be laughing or cheering, or, with set teeth, silently—but they all went."

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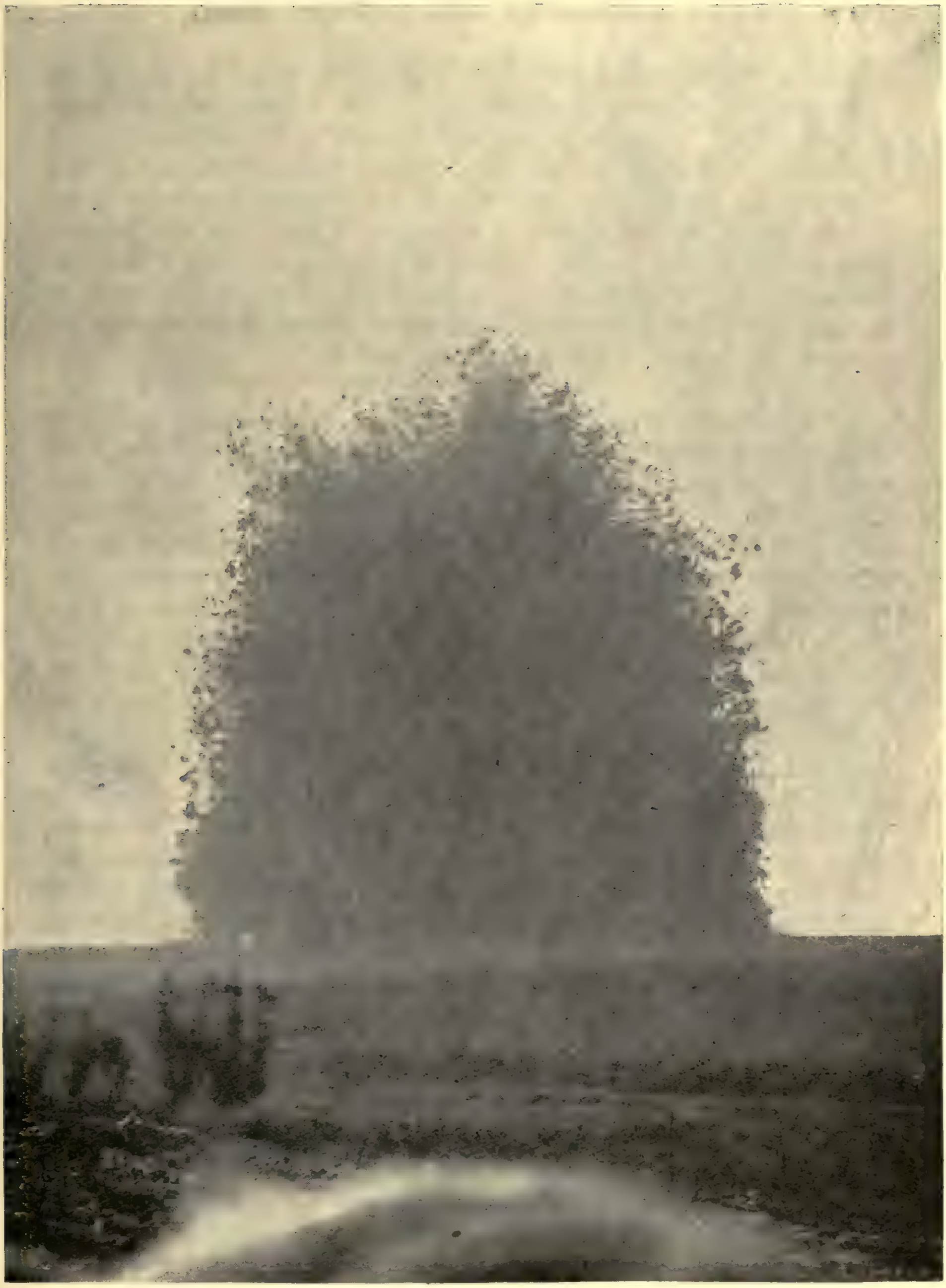
A wounded sergeant, recounting his experiences of that day, said:—

"There's not a man who didn't play the game as well as he might have done, and I haven't heard of one in any other unit—not a single one. 'Fraid I'm not much of a praying man; but if I'd set to work praying on the night before we went into



The Explosion of the Great Mine near La Boisselle.
(*Photo, Sport and General Press.*)

this show—and, mind you, I dare say lots of chaps not given that way did pray that night—if I had, what I should have prayed would have been that my company should accomplish just about half what it did. I shouldn't have dared to ask that they should do all that they actually did when the time came. I told 'em what the Boche newspapers said—how Kitchener's men didn't count seriously, and all that—and they went into the scrap like knights of old with their ladies lookin' on; as though the New Army would stand or fall in history accordin' as each single one of them carried himself."

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"We moved out," said a colonel, "at the appointed time with twenty-three out of our total complement of officers. All units left a portion in reserve. Well, sixteen of the twenty-three, I know, were casualties that same morning, though only two were killed. You may judge that the fire was hot to knock out sixteen out of twenty-three officers at the very outset. Yet, mind you, our fellows reached their objective. Whatever happens, there can be no sort of doubt about the superiority of our men. Man for man, the Germans cannot approach them for spirit and gallantry. They could not have been finer; no soldiers could. They were superb. The Boche machine guns brought up from the deep concrete bombardment shelters were sweeping that front with an absolute hail of lead. Nothing could live in it. Our fellows knew all about it. They could see. And I give you my word, our only trouble with them was to prevent them charging right into the thick of it before the chosen moment. There never has been finer spirit shown; there never could be. I don't speak of my battalion only. Ask any officer. Every one I have spoken to had exactly the same experience. Our men are not bullet-proof. When they enter a zone of living fire they get hit. But till they get picked out they balk at nothing. No prospect can check them. They are as brave as mortal men can be.

"The officers? My officers were splendid, all of them—all of them. Take quite a young fellow, now—Lieutenant Chawner, a most gallant young officer. In the teeth of that tornado of fire he dashed across No Man's Land at the head of his platoon. He actually landed in the Boche front line without a man (his platoon was a small one)—not one man got through but himself. And he found himself face to face with three Boches, whom he promptly threatened with his revolver. He made them lay down their rifles, took the three of them prisoners, and ordered them back to our own lines. Just then he was knocked over by a shell fragment, with one of the Boches. When he recovered consciousness, one of the remaining two Boches, who seems to have known which was the better side to be on, was bandaging him; the other had vanished. So Chawner thanked the Boche who bandaged him, and then marched the man back to our lines a prisoner."

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A rifleman of the County of London Regiment, who was formerly in the Inland Revenue Department, said :—

"It certainly is a bit strange from the Civil Service to the Gommecourt Wood, but I wouldn't have missed it for worlds. Not that I want it repeated just now. It isn't exactly pleasant to lie for eight hours against barbed wire in front of the German lines, and this bullet through my hand constantly reminds me that I have not been working in an office lately.

"But let me tell you what the boys did; it will make pleasant reading for any one interested in the Queen's Westminsters. We went over three lines of German trenches—just swept along as I have seen a really good pack of Irish forwards—carrying everything before us. Of course we had to pay a price. From my own experience I know that the Germans were well prepared for an attack. Not that their infantry did a great deal—they were either blown to pieces or dazed by our terrific bombardment—but they had massed at Hébuterne and Gommecourt, and this fire we had to face.

"It would have been better if we had been content to stay at the third line. But we advanced towards the fourth, and then found that we had no bombs left, that there were no reinforcements and no supports, so we had to retire."

* * * * * * *

Not the least gallant of the many gallant attacks made on 1st July was that of the Ulster Division, which advanced against the slopes which sink south of Beaumont to the Ancre. It was the anniversary of the Battle of the Boyne, and the men shouted as they charged, "Remember the Boyne!" A correspondent who was an eye-witness of the attack wrote as follows :—

"I am not an Ulsterman, but as I followed the amazing attack of the Ulster Division, I felt that I would rather be an Ulsterman than anything else in the world. My position enabled me to watch the commencement of the attack from the wood in which they had formed up, but which, long before the hour of assault, was being overwhelmed with shell fire, so that the trees were stripped and the top half of the wood ceased to be anything but a slope of bare stumps, with innumerable holes peppered in the chalk.

" It looked as if nothing could live in the wood, and indeed the losses were heavy before they started, two companies of one battalion being sadly reduced in the assembly trenches. When I saw the men emerge through the smoke and form up as if on parade, I could scarcely believe my eyes. Then I saw them attack, beginning at a slow walk over No Man's Land, and then suddenly let loose as they charged over the two front lines of the enemy's trenches, shouting, ' No surrender, boys ! '

" The enemy's gunfire raked them from the left, and machine guns in a village enfiladed them on the right ; but battalion after battalion came out of the awful wood as steadily as I have seen them when on parade at an Ulster demonstration. The enemy's third line was soon taken, and still the waves went on, getting thinner and thinner but never ceasing to advance. The fourth line fell before them, and there remained the fifth line. Men in the neighbouring corps and divisions could not withhold their praise at what they had seen. They said no human beings could get at the enemy's fifth line until the flanks of the Ulster Division were cleared. This was recognized, and the attack was countermanded. The order arrived too late ; or perhaps the Ulstermen, mindful that it was the anniversary of the Boyne, would not be denied, and pressed on.

" I could only see a small portion of this advance, but I could watch our men work forward, seeming to escape the shell fire by a miracle ; and I saw parties of them, now much reduced indeed, enter the fifth line of the enemy's trenches—our final objective. It could not be held, as the division had pushed forward into a narrow salient. The corps on our right and left had been unable to advance, so that the Ulstermen were the target of the hostile guns and machine guns behind and on both flanks, though the enemy in front were beaten and were retreating.

" The order to retire was given ; but some preferred to die on the ground which they had won so hardly. Occasionally I saw batches of German prisoners being passed back over the deadly zone, but many of them did not survive the fire of their own guns.

"My pen cannot describe adequately the hundreds of heroic deeds that I witnessed. The Ulster Division had lost very heavily, and in doing so had sacrificed itself for the Empire. The Ulster Volunteer Force, from which the division was formed, had won a name which equals any in history. Their devotion, which no doubt helped the advance elsewhere, deserves the gratitude of the British Empire."

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It is said that the Royal Irish Fusiliers were first out of their trenches. The Royal Irish Rifles followed them over the German parapets, and killed the men in the machine-gun emplacements with their bayonets. Though a murderous cross-fire assailed them from above the Ancre, and machine guns were playing on them from three sides, the Inniskillings rushed and cleared out certain positions in the enemy's line to which they had given Irish names. Only a remnant returned, but they brought with them nearly six hundred prisoners. Nothing finer was done in the whole campaign. An amusing story connected with this advance was told by a young second-lieutenant. His platoon was reduced to five men, but he managed to get together a number of scattered units, and at their head started off again for "C" trench—his objective.

"I suppose the Boches spotted us, or maybe it was chance. But we got a rather hot fire. I was knocked clean out for a start—got it through my thigh. But the boys were all right. I told 'em they'd get all the glory, and wished 'em luck; and on they went for 'C.' I was a bit queer, but started working myself along the ground towards our own lines, not being able to stand, you see. By-and-by a Boche corporal came crawling along after me. He shouted some gibberish, and I waved him on towards our lines with my revolver. He wasn't wounded, but he was very anxious to make sure of being taken prisoner. Begad, you don't get our chaps paying them the same compliment. They'll take any risks sooner than let the Boches get them as prisoners. So this chap lay down close beside me. I told him to be off out of that, but he lay close, and I'd no breath to spare. That crawling is tiresome work.

Men of the East Surreys and their Match against Death.

(From the picture by R. Caton Woodville.

"As the company emerged from the trenches and formed up, the platoon commanders kicked off, and
But still the footballs were booted onwards with hoarse cries of encouragement."

Following up Footballs kicked towards the German Trenches.

By permission of The Illustrated London News.)

the match against death began. . . . Men began to drop rapidly under the hail of machine-gun bullets.

" Presently I saw a man of ours coming along, poking round with his rifle and bayonet. He'd been detailed to shepherd the prisoners. He was surprised to see me. Then he saw my Boche.

" ' Get up,' says he, ' an' be off with ye out o' that ! '—and he poked at him with his bayonet. So the fellow squealed, and plucked up enough courage to get upon his feet and run for our lines."

* * * * * * *

It is impossible to give you accounts of all the units which played so noble a part on that first day of the " Great Push " in the most difficult part of the line, but I must not omit to mention the heroism of a company of the East Surreys. The captain of one of the companies had provided four footballs, one for each platoon, and he urged his men to keep up a dribbling competition all the way over the mile and a quarter of ground which they had to traverse. " As the company emerged from the trenches and formed up," said one of the officers, " the platoon commanders kicked off, and the match against death began.* The gallant captain himself fell early in the charge, and the men began to drop rapidly under the hail of machine-gun bullets. But still the footballs were booted onwards with hoarse cries of encouragement, until the men disappeared into the dense smother behind which the Germans were shooting. Then, when bombs and bayonets had done their work and the enemy had been cleared out, the Surrey men looked for their footballs, and recovered two of them in the captured traverses. These will be sent to the regimental depot at Kingston as trophies worth preserving." †

* See picture, pp. 40–41.

† Towards the end of July 1916 the newspapers announced that at a special parade of the East Surrey Regiment, Colonel H. P. Treeby, D.S.O., received one of the footballs which had played so important a part in the advance. Addressing the assembled men, he said, " The care of this sacred emblem of the battalion's devotion and heroism has been entrusted to me by the commanding officer. In affectionate memory we shall lay it up. In years to come it will be a fitting memorial of the devotion and sacrifice of the —— Battalion, which played the game so well on that eventful day, and served so heroically our God, our King, and our country."

CHAPTER V.

HOW WE CAPTURED MONTAUBAN.

WE must now move southward and see what was happening while the gallant but unavailing deeds of which you have just read were being performed. Look at the map on page 45, and notice that between Ovillers * and Maricourt † the German line formed a bold salient. We intended to capture this salient by an advance to the north of Fricourt against Ovillers and La Boisselle, and a similar advance to the south-east of Fricourt against the village of Mametz. If these attacks should be successful the salient would be cut off, and would be bound to fall. At the same time we intended to make a frontal attack on Fricourt itself.

Ovillers and La Boisselle were very strongly fortified, and the troops sent against them made but slow progress. Nevertheless by one o'clock in the afternoon ground had been gained, and, thanks to a splendid advance by the Royal Scots, the Lincolns, and other units, part of La Boisselle was captured. The Scots and the Lincolns had to make their way through very heavy shell fire, and they were enfiladed by machine guns. Nevertheless, not content with occupying the wrecked first-line trenches of the enemy and bombing out the remaining occupants, they pushed on towards the village, where they were met with an even fiercer fire. " It seemed to me," said one of the Lincolns, " that there was a machine gun to every five men of the enemy." Not only had they to face machine guns, but the sky above them was white with puffs of bursting shrapnel, and the ground beneath them was riven and slashed by high-explosive shells. Through this rain of death the troops pushed on, the trenches were carried at the point of

* *Oh-ve-lair.* † *Ma-re-koor.*

the bayonet, and the advance was not stayed until the men were beyond La Boisselle and were pushing on towards Contalmaison.*

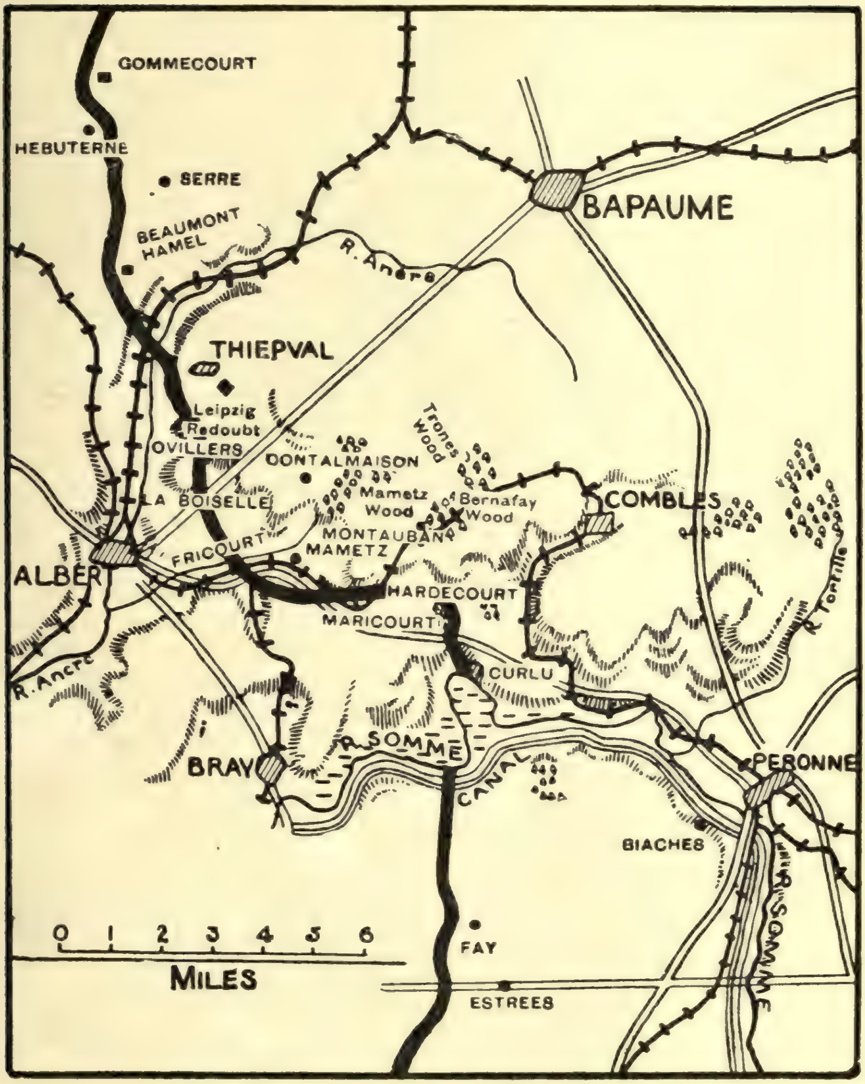
The trenches in front of Fricourt no longer existed, and those behind had been badly wrecked; but the dug-outs still held many Germans, with machine guns, and long periscopes by means of which they watched the British lines. The moment our men appeared the gunners rushed up the steps from below, and, planting their guns amidst the debris, raked the advance with a terrible fire. Meanwhile snipers were busy picking off the officers. Only 150 yards separated the trenches of friend and foe, yet one north-country battalion in crossing that short distance lost nearly all its officers. As soon, however, as our men were amongst the defenders they made havoc of them. The third line was captured, and the day's work of the division on this section was done.

To one of the most famous divisions in the British army had been allotted the task of capturing Mametz. This division had fought in the First Battle of Ypres, at Festubert, and at Loos. Though many of the men who had won glory for the division were now beneath the sod or were lying wounded and maimed in hospitals, still there were some battalions which had seen twenty months of hard fighting. Other battalions were new, but all were full of the spirit of the old. Mametz, like all the villages in front of the British line, had been battered into shapeless ruin, but the tower of its church still stood like a broken tooth of masonry above the site of the village. Behind it and around it were splintered woods, and to the south was a little hill scored with German trench lines.

Against these trenches three battalions were launched—one from a southern English county, one from a northern city, and one of Highland regulars. They advanced as though on the drill ground, and those who followed in their track saw with astonishment that their dead lay in regular lines. Before evening Mametz was ours.

The most perfect success of the day, however, was won at Montauban,† which you will see on the map about three miles to the east of Fricourt. In this part of the line the artillery had done its work perfectly. The village had been reduced to a few broken walls in the midst of splintered trees, and the

* *Kon-tal-may-zon.* † *Mon-toe-bon* (*n* nasal).



strong *fortins* in the brickfields to the right had been pounded into utter ruin. So deadly had been the bombardment that the 6th Bavarian Regiment, which was holding this part of the line, lost 3,000 out of 3,500 men. The attack was made mainly by Lancashire troops, supported by Bedfords and Home County battalions. In the right centre the Germans had turned a perfect honeycomb of mine craters and shell holes into a very strongly fortified position, which our men called "The Warren." While some of our troops were seizing and clearing this death-trap, other units were advancing on the village. From every ruined house came the rattle of machine guns and the crack of rifles, but there was no pause in our advance. Furious hand-to-hand fighting took place amongst the heaps of rubbish that once were streets, and slowly but surely the Germans were driven out. Montauban was won.

Prisoners were captured in droves. They came up out of the cellars and dug-outs holding up their hands and crying "Kamerad!" or falling upon their knees and begging for mercy. Many others, however, preferred to die rather than yield. For example, a number of snipers had concealed themselves in a deep dug-out, which had been overlooked by our troops when they first entered the village. Shots from the rear began to fall upon our men, and several fell before the nest of snipers was discovered. The Germans were called upon to surrender; but as they made no reply, bombs were thrown among them. Later on firing broke out again from the same spot. This time a hole was made in the top of the dug-out, a powerful charge was inserted, and with the explosion all within perished.

The speedy capture of Montauban was a great blow to the enemy. He turned his guns upon it, and in the course of the afternoon sent his infantry against it in fierce counter-attacks. But our men held fast, and mowed down the enemy as they advanced. Montauban was lost to the Germans for good, and do what they might they could not win it back.

On the right of this victorious division lay the French, and, for the first time in the war, Britons and French were seen advancing in line. Worthy comrades, indeed, were these Frenchmen, for they belonged to the famous "Iron Corps," which had held the Grand Couronné of Nancy in the early days of the war, had fought in the Marne battle, and by a counter-attack at Douaumont on a snowy day in February had turned the tide at Verdun. Khaki and blue advanced together, and behind both the wonderful 75's kept up an unending racket.

From what you have read in this and in former chapters, you know that the British had to attack positions which the Germans had made terribly strong, and in which they lay awaiting

Germans cut off by the British Curtain and Artillery Fire at Montauban coming up from the Cellars and surrendering.

(*From the picture by A. Forestier. By permission of the Illustrated London News.*)

the assault. All the ground gained had to be bought at a great price of blood and valour. The French, however, took the enemy completely by surprise in their section of the line. When the word was given they sprang forward, and with amazing speed captured position after position. Officers were seized while shaving in their dug-outs ; whole battalions were rounded up, and never were such great successes attained at so small a loss. One French regiment had only two casualties, and the total number of men put out of action in one division was but 800. Long before the short summer night shrouded the battlefield the entire German first position from Mametz to the Somme, and beyond to the village of Fay, had been captured —a front of fourteen miles. Six thousand prisoners had been taken, and great numbers of guns and stores. In the trenches, the woods, and the wrecked houses the German dead lay thick on the ground. The French had won their most striking and most complete success.

On the evening of that ever-memorable 1st July Sir Douglas Haig sent home the following report :—

> " Heavy fighting has continued all day between the Somme and the Ancre, and north of the Ancre as far as Gommecourt. On the right of the attack we have captured the German labyrinth of trenches on a front of seven miles to a depth of 1,000 yards, and have stormed and occupied the strongly fortified villages of Montauban and Mametz. In the centre of our attack, on a front of four miles, we have gained many strong points, while at others the enemy is still holding out, and the struggle on this front is still severe.
>
> " North of the Ancre valley to Gommecourt the battle has been equally violent, and in this area we have been unable to retain portions of the ground gained in our first attacks, while other portions remain in our possession.
>
> " Up to date over 2,000 German prisoners have passed through our collecting stations, including two regimental commanders and the whole of one regimental staff.
>
> " The large number of the enemy dead on the battlefield indicates that the German casualties have been very severe, especially in the vicinity of Fricourt."

CHAPTER VI.

MORE SOLDIERS' STORIES OF THE "GREAT PUSH."

SIR DOUGLAS HAIG, in his dispatch which described the first day of the Somme battle, spoke of the "German labyrinth of trenches." The Athenian of old who built a maze of winding passages in order to secure the Minotaur * never constructed anything more intricate. The communication trenches were in some places tunnels a hundred yards long, lined with timber throughout, and so deep as to be beyond reach of the heaviest shells. Little manholes for snipers were dug out in the No Man's Land, and were so cunningly concealed that our men often passed them by without noticing them. Each of these snipers' pits was connected by an underground passage with the trenches. But the dug-outs were the greatest marvels of all. One of them which our men captured at Fricourt had nine rooms and five bolt-holes, iron doors, gas, curtains, and almost everything that you could find in a well-ordered home. Some of them had two stories, and staircases thirty feet wide. In another part of the line the dug-outs were lighted by electricity.

A second lieutenant in a Yorkshire regiment tells us a good story of a German dug-out and its occupants. It was in the first line of trenches taken by his platoon. He was hit in the leg, and had to stay behind while his men went forward to the next trench. I will tell you the rest of the story in his own words :—

"I was resting in a hollow sap in their first line when I saw a Boche officer come climbing cautiously out of the big

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* According to ancient Greek legend, a terrible monster with a man's body and a bull's head, who was confined by King Minos in the Labyrinth, and to whom were given from time to time Athenian youths and maidens.

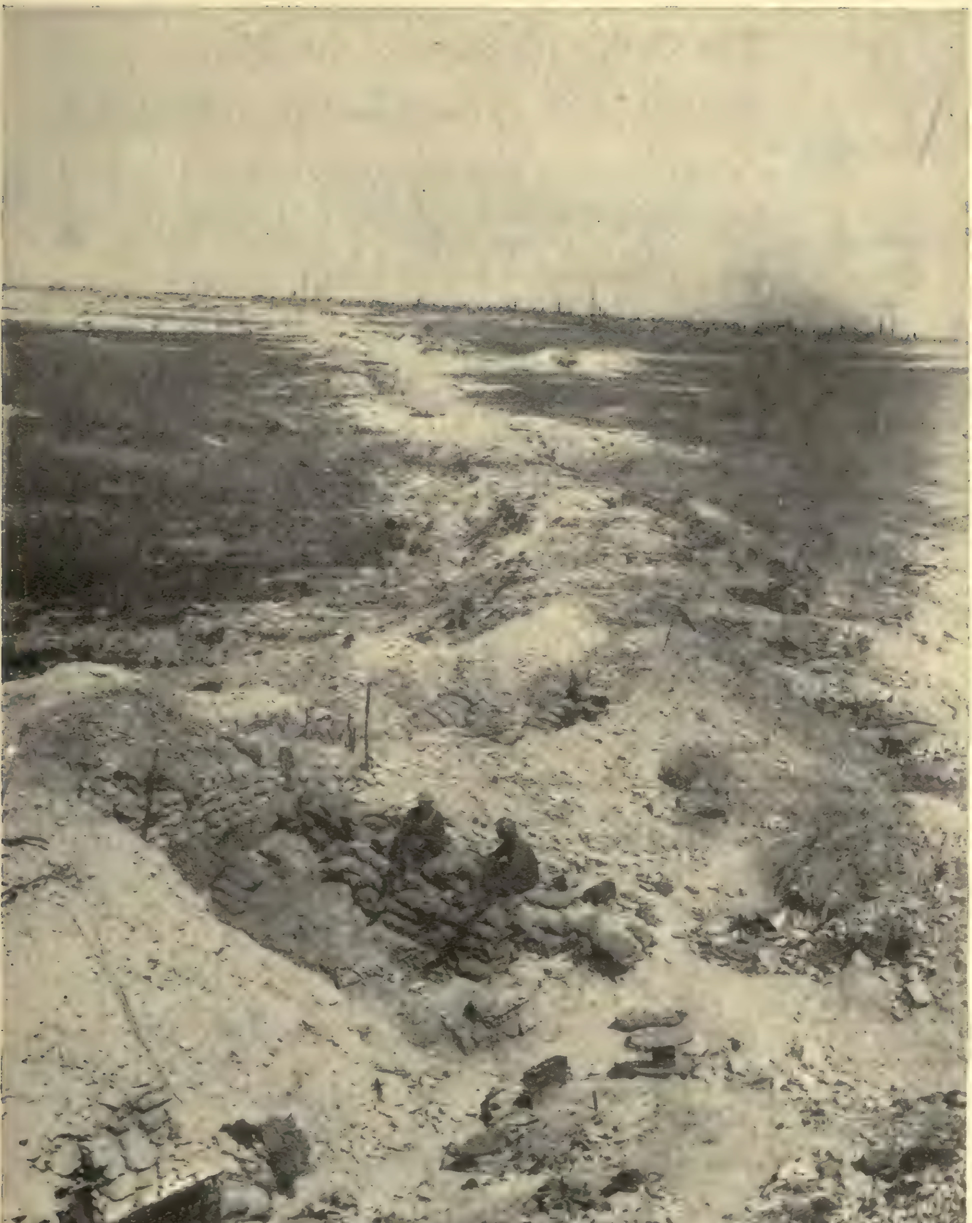
dug-out. He was a captain. He had a bomb in one hand, and a rifle and bayonet in the other, and he was peering first one way and then the other, like a burglar. 'Oh, you beauty!' I thought. And just then he snuggled down against a gap in the back of the trench near the dug-out, and bedded his rifle comfortably for firing at our chaps behind. You can bet I was glad I had my rifle and plenty of ammunition. So I got a beautiful bead on this chap, and a second later he was—I wonder where dead Boches go?

"I charged my breech again, and no sooner had I done it than my next target bobs up—a lieutenant. I got him while he was looking at his captain. Well, to cut it short, two more lieutenants came up from that same dug-out, making in all three lieutenants and one captain, and I got 'em all.

"And then a private came up with never a weapon in his hands and a terrified look on his white face. 'You're a Boche,' I thought, 'and you ought to be shot; but you've got nothing in your silly hands.' It was too much like shooting a sitting bird, you know. Couldn't manage it. 'Here!' I shouted at him. He fell just the same as if I'd shot him. I managed to clamber to the trench and poke him with the butt of my rifle till he found himself a little and stood up. I meant to see that dug-out for myself, but I had to get the Boche's help.

"I kept him in front, you may be sure; but if I'd been an old blind beggar he wouldn't have had pluck enough to empty my tin can. That dug-out was a bit knocked about, you know, by the six bombs which my fellows had thrown into it before they passed on. At the back of the lowest corner there was a sharp twist round to the right, and a door with broken glass panels.

"We went through the door, along a passage, down four steps, and into a regular boudoir. Dug-out! Why, there was a Turkey carpet on the floor, and beautiful tapestry curtains to the bunks. Never saw anything like it. There were three cases of beer, about a hundred eggs, two cut hams, sausages, several boxes of cigars, one case of champagne, a gramophone, and lashins of cakes and chocolate. There was an electric bell fixed, and a small typewriter. It was a regular show, that place. I took a dispatch case, and all the loose papers on the table, and got the Boche to help me back again to daylight. There wasn't a living soul to be found in the trench; so I got him



A Captured German Trench. [*Photo, Central News.*

Ovillers can be seen in the background. The white chalk trench line can be followed for miles.

to take me pickaback and carry the dispatch case, while I stuck to my rifle.

"'Now then, Gustave Wilhelm Albrecht von Boche,' I said to him, 'we will *ausgang* * as *schnell* † as we can for our own lines, *compree?*' He was a little slow in the uptake, as you might say, but tumbled to it after a bit."

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The Germans had been told that the English took no prisoners. This falsehood made the more stout-hearted of them fight to the death, and sent the poorer spirited cowering in dug-outs, from which they had to be hauled forth. Many of them were quite nerve-shattered by the bombardment, and some of them had quite lost their wits. A sergeant of a London regiment said:—

"We were clearing out a bit of their second-line trench when I came on the entrance to a deep dug-out. I couldn't see whether there was any one there, so I stopped and listened. I could hear nothing, so I started to explore. The moment my foot stepped on the sill of the doorway I heard an electric bell ring somewhere down below. That decided me. I called up one of our lads who was carrying bombs, and we dropped a Mills grenade into the dug-out. Then the bomber and I stood back, one on each side of the doorway, and waited. A Mills grenade takes about five seconds to explode; but before that period was up *seven* Germans had come out of that dug-out. It was the best bit of emergency-exit work I have ever seen."

* * * * * * *

One of the Berkshires gave his opinion of the Germans as follows:—

"They are good fighters to the last ten yards, but they won't fight then. Of all the men wounded in my battalion only two had bayonet wounds. But their machine guns are terrible. Fritz is very cunning, and he has his tunnels from the first to the second line, so that he can drag his machine guns about and use them in either. You think you are all right, and then he begins to play on you from behind. Some of the prisoners told us they had been brought there from Verdun for a rest!"

* * * * * * *

When the Germans surrendered our men treated them

* German for "go on."

† German for "quickly."

kindly. They were never vindictive—quite the reverse. A well-known writer who visited the front about this time tells us that he saw two wounded Gordon Highlanders hobbling along, and supporting between them a wounded German. Later on they were noticed giving him water and cigarettes, and he was cutting buttons from his tunic as souvenirs for them. An officer declared that "for sheer goodness of heart, for kindness to all unfortunate things like prisoners, wounded, and animals, our men 'fairly beat the band.'"

* * * * * * *

Mr. Philip Gibbs, who has been frequently quoted in these pages, gives us a very vivid and touching account of our wounded men returning from battle :—

"They were wonderful men—so wonderful in their gaiety and courage that one's heart melted at the sight of them. They were all grinning. . . . There was a look of pride in their eyes as they came driving down like wounded knights from a tourney. They had gone through the job with honour, and had come out with their lives, and the world was good and beautiful again in this warm sun, in these snug French villages, where peasant men and women waved hands to them, and in these fields of scarlet and gold and green.

"The men who were going up to the battle grinned back at those who were coming back. One could not see the faces of the lying-down cases—only the soles of their boots as they passed ; but the laughing men on the lorries—some of them stripped to the waist and bandaged roughly—seemed to rob war of some of its horrors. The spirit of our British soldiers shines very bright along the roads of France, so that the very sun seems to get some of its gold from these men's hearts."

* * * * * * *

I described the capture of Montauban as the most perfect operation of the day. It is said that the Manchesters had the honour of being the first to enter the village. A sergeant gives us a very good account of the advance of his platoon :—

"We entered the trenches on Friday midnight, and were disposed in two lines. Everybody thought that, as usual, we should attack at dawn, but dawn came and there was no attack.

"We were wondering what was happening when word came that we were to go over the parapet at 7.30. This delay bluffed the Germans properly. They never anticipated that we should attack so late in the morning, for dawn is always the time when things begin to be lively. . . .

"When we were told that we should not be wanted until 7.30 a.m., such of us as could sleep standing did so. Fifteen minutes before the attack was timed to commence the order came to fix bayonets, and I stood on the top of the parapet watching my watch, which I wore on my wrist. Punctually at 7.30 I gave my platoon the tip to come on. . . .

"The chaps went forward in good style, and in less than five minutes we had reached the first line of trenches. We walked forward, carrying our rifles sloping, bayonet end towards our shoulders. It was *some* walking, I can tell you, for the shells were flying about. They were directed more on to our trenches than on to us, and I think it was safer to be, as we were, out in the open.

"In the enemy's front-line trenches we found few live Germans; they were all down in the dug-outs. But we had no time to bother with them, and we left the dug-outs to be dealt with by the battalion that was to follow us. Words fail me to describe the condition of the trenches. They were simply flattened out. We had brought ladders along with us, and these we laid down and got over with the utmost ease.

"We walked to the next lot of trenches, still being shelled, and found them in much the same condition as the trenches we had just left—that is to say, pounded out of shape. Again we saw very few Germans.

"On advancing beyond these trenches we ran into heavy machine-gun fire, but reached the third line of trenches with only a moderate number of casualties. I looked at my watch, and saw that it had taken us just fifteen minutes to get across, having travelled in this time rather under half a mile—a fairly quick advance, it will be admitted.

"We rested in the third German trenches for about twenty minutes, smoking, talking, and generally quite merry. . . . A jolly, smiling lot we were as we went ahead again; but no sooner had we stepped into No Man's Land than the machine guns began to play on us. Machine guns or no machine guns, nothing could stop the boys that morning, and they went steadily on until they reached the German fourth line. . . .

"The next moment I felt myself struck, and my instinct was to crawl back. This was no easy matter, for the Germans were sweeping almost every inch of ground behind us, while our artillery was concentrating on the German positions beyond the fourth line, lifting beautifully to keep time with our men's advance. . . .

"What impressed me most was the splendid way in which all our chap's kept line. You would see a man drop on each side of you with a bullet through his arm or leg, or a bit of shrapnel in his thigh, but the line went on as if nothing had happened. . . . I have never seen anything like the coolness of our chaps that morning in my life.

"The Germans fought well until we got near them; then all the heart seemed to go out of them, and they were like a lot of frightened schoolboys, throwing down their rifles and equipment and holding up their hands, trembling all the time with fright. I think it was not so much a case of cowardice as of being half stunned by our bombardment and the suddenness of our attack.

"The advance of the different regiments had left a valley in which hundreds of Germans were trapped. As our chaps came round the Germans ran down this valley, and found there was no outlet, for we held the positions to the right of them, and on the line of retreat for which they were heading. Hundreds of them surrendered. There were some pitiful sights among the dead and dying.

"Some of the Germans whom we took as prisoners appeared to be uncertain about their fate, and to excite our pity showed us photographs of their wives and children, and nice women and youngsters they looked. I dare say their officers had told them some yarn about all prisoners being killed. When they saw with what consideration we treated them I think they lost their fears. . . .

"There was very little excitement about our chaps either before or after the battle. They did their job quickly and well, and never troubled about the shouting. One of our fellows was so little put out that when he saw a pal munching a bit of toffee he offered him twopence for it. Just fancy wanting to buy toffee on a battlefield!

"The way the battle was organized was simply a revelation. Don't let people at home talk about German organization after this. No single detail was left out of the reckoning. We even

A Battalion of the New Army

(From the drawing by F. Matania.

A battalion of the New Army working forward and preceded by a heavy curtain fire came suddenly gunners and horses just as they were limbering up. The few gunners who had escaped had taken refuge taken prisoners. Our illustration shows the scene after the gun had been captured and the last show of

capturing a German Gun

By permission of The Sphere.)

upon a German 4.7-inch gun and captured it. One of our guns had evidently caught it, and had killed in dug-outs close by, and now began to put up a resistance with carbines. They were either killed or resistance was being overcome.

remembered to put up signposts as we went forward for the use of the rear battalions. . . .

" If I were asked to give my opinion why the battle turned out so successfully for us, I should say it was because every arm of the service did its work well—artillery, airmen, infantry—and every man knew exactly what his job was. Again, although the Germans believed they knew all about our attack, we quite bluffed them as to the hour, so the element of surprise was not lost to us."

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Our men were full of admiration for the French, who attacked along with them on their right. " It was wonderful to see them advance," said a wounded non-com. " Our division went into action on the extreme right of the British line, so we were touching the French left flank. I had met hundreds of them back in billets. To look at them strolling down a village street in their baggy uniforms, with their hands in their pockets, laughing and chatting to the children, you would never have thought they were such tigers. I remember one big fellow a few weeks ago, home on leave, who used to go about with a big umbrella under his arm ! I suppose that was to keep the rain off his tin hat. But when they went for Maricourt the other day there weren't many umbrellas about—only bayonets ! I tell you, they were marvels ! "

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" As we were going into Montauban," wrote a soldier, " we saw a machine gunner up a tree. He'd got the neatest little platform you ever saw, painted so that it was almost invisible. . . . The spirit of our boys was splendid. They simply loved the show. One of them got blown down by a shell. He seemed pretty dazed, but he picked himself up and came along. All he said was, ' Oh, there must be a war on after all, I suppose ! ' "

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A party of prisoners with whom were two officers were being marched back in charge of a guard. One of the German lieutenants approached the British officer, unpinned the Iron Cross from his breast, and held it out to him. The British officer asked him what he meant. " Take it for having done what we considered to be impossible," said the German. " I give it to you." The British officer thanked him, but refused the gift, explaining that it was not the custom of the British army to deprive an unfortunate enemy of anything which he had won by his bravery.

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During the fighting opposite Fricourt a sergeant of a Yorkshire regiment led his section into the fourth line of German trenches in the front-line system. Here, under heavy fire, he and his men managed to collect twenty-four prisoners. Although surrounded and fired upon from all sides, the gallant little party held on all day. But by the time darkness fell the sergeant was the only man able to stand upright, and he thought the time had come to beat a retreat and see what help he could get for the wounded. Accordingly he ordered his prisoners to fall in and march, which they did. So fierce was the barrage that in the return journey half the Germans were knocked over. The sergeant, who appeared to bear a charmed life, reported with regret that he had not been able to bring back more than twelve Germans!

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During the first day's fighting a wounded lad of nineteen actually marched twenty Germans back across No Man's Land to the British trenches. It is said that the boy enjoyed his novel position hugely, and that he shouted all sorts of instructions to his prisoners at the top of his voice.

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Elsewhere a badly wounded lance-corporal of the Dorsets was seen. "His left arm was helpless," said the man who told the story. "I saw him from the shell hole that I rolled into when I was 'pipped.' He swung his rifle with bayonet fixed in his right arm—a big, fair chap he was, like a Viking—and he bailed up five fully-armed Boches beside my shell hole. 'Drop them rifles!' he shouted. 'Mercy, mercy, kamerad!' they cried. They dropped their rifles—I picked up one for myself after—and that lance-corporal marched the five back to our line, handed them over, and then came back and helped me."

CHAPTER VII.

THE FALL OF FRICOURT.

THE short summer night descended upon the battlefield, but there was little or no sleep for the men who had crossed the German line. All night long they were bombing the enemy out of cellars and dug-outs, strengthening their new positions, or working round *fortins* that still held out. The success of the previous day had been on the right, and that part of our line was now flung forward in advance of the centre. With the dawn of Sunday, a day of much heat during which the dust rose in thick clouds, we began an attempt to bring our left forward, so that a future advance might be made from a straight front.

All that day a fierce struggle raged at Ovillers and La Boisselle. You will remember that we had already gained positions close to the latter village. Before Sunday was over our men were in part of the huddle of ruins that marked the site of La Boisselle, and were busy driving the Germans from the cellars and other underground refuges.

On the previous day the airmen had been very active. They had bombed enemy headquarters and railway centres behind the German lines, and had done much damage. During one of these raids twenty enemy aeroplanes made an attack on the British aircraft which were so employed, but they were driven off, and two of them were destroyed. On the same day one of our airmen dropped a bomb on a railway truck, and, judging from the loud explosion which followed, was fortunate enough to blow up a trainload of ammunition.

On Sunday the airmen were even more busy, and the success of their efforts was clear to all beholders. While our kite balloons were to be seen swaying in the breeze all along our line, a single " sausage " alone hovered over the enemy's positions. Our airmen had bombed the rest, which had disappeared in wisps of flame.

The great success of Sunday was the capture of Fricourt. During the night the enemy had heavily shelled the ground which we had won in front of the village; but our men had held on firmly, and early in the morning they were strongly reinforced. Two attacks were then made on the salient—the one from the north, the other from the south. The fall of the village could not be long delayed, for we held Mametz and certain positions in the Fricourt woods, and hour by hour were squeezing tighter and tighter the bottle-neck that gave the defenders communication with the rear. While the flank attacks were in progress, a new division made a frontal assault on the village itself.

Fricourt was by this time a mere rubbish heap, and the guns were working awful havoc on the Germans in the trenches. Some of them had escaped in the night, but a rearguard still remained to hold up our advance as long as possible. By two o'clock in the afternoon our men were in the village, and were able to see for themselves the terrible effect of the cannonading. In one place they saw a German lying dead, still clasping the grenade which he was about to throw when death overtook him. In another place a single shell had killed three infantrymen and buried them beneath a fallen wall. Everywhere the trenches were full of dead.

Most of the defenders had by this time retreated, leaving their wounded behind them. In the dug-outs about a hundred and fifty men still remained, and when our troops arrived, came forward holding up their hands. They were in a miserable plight. They said that our fire had been so fierce that they had been unable to leave the dug-out, and that they had been thirty hours or more without food or water. Amongst the prisoners was a fox-terrier puppy that had been left behind by its master. You may be sure that our men promptly took charge of it and treated it kindly. Afterwards it became the pet of one of our battalions.

The capture of Fricourt gave us the wedge of country between La Boisselle and Montauban. Before the village was cleared we pushed on towards the high ridge above it. The Germans now shelled this ridge heavily, and the machine gunners kept up a constant fire; but our men did not falter, and by the end of the day had made good progress up the slope. Farther south the French were sweeping onward from success to success. Village after village fell into their hands, and in spite of counter-attacks they retained all their gains. South of the river they captured Frise, and at Assevillers* broke into the German second position.

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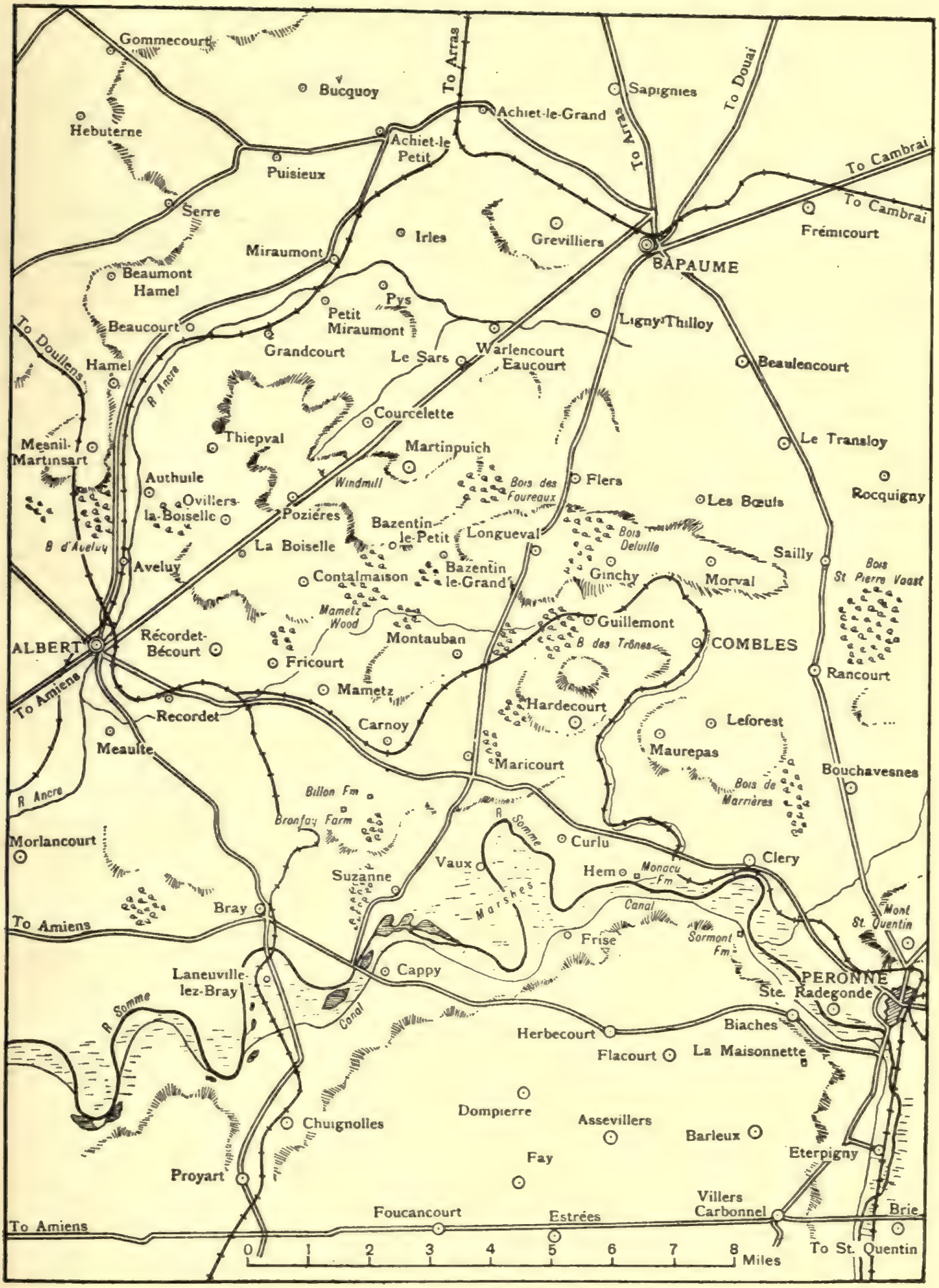
The German newspapers made light of the Allied success, but their generals knew that the position was grave indeed. General von Below, who commanded the 2nd Army, which was being so hard pressed between the Ancre and the Somme, said so in an order which he issued the next day. He told his troops that they must win back the important ground that had been lost, and he forbade them to give up their trenches. "The will to stand firm must be impressed," he said, "on every man in the army. The enemy should have to carve his way over heaps of corpses. . . . I require commanding officers to devote their utmost energies to the establishment of order behind the front."

Why did von Below insist that the lost ground must be retaken, and that no more trenches must be given up? For eighteen months his men had been at work making the great labyrinth of which you have read. The front line of these strongholds had now gone, and the remainder were in danger. If they were lost, the Germans would have to dig in anew on much weaker positions in the rear. The British guns would give them no chance to construct new lines of great strength, and they would have to meet fresh attacks in shallow and hastily-made trenches. Von Below knew well that he was in perilous plight.

On Sunday evening, after two days of incessant struggle, the Allied position was as follows. From Gommecourt to Thiepval we had made little progress. Between Thiepval and Ovillers, where the fortified ridges in the rear rose to nearly five hundred feet, we had battled vainly against the very core of the German defence. The bare rolling hills had been excavated into deep, shell-proof caves, in which whole battalions could take refuge. The Germans knew that they must hold Thiepval at all costs; it was the buttress of the northern part

* *Ass-e-ve-lair.*



Map to illustrate the War Area during the Great Offensive.

of their line. They had garrisoned it with their best soldiers; they had massed their artillery in the rear; and their machine gunners had sworn to fight to the death. As far south as Ovillers we were still hammering at the German first line.

La Boisselle was only partly in our hands; but thence onward we had made splendid progress. Fricourt, Mametz, Montauban, Hardecourt, and Curlu had all fallen, and south of the river an advance of a good two miles had been made. In all this part of the line the Allies were now battering at the enemy's second line.

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During the early days of the "Great Push" our newspapers laid much stress on the ground that had been won and the number of guns that had been captured. I want you particularly to remember that our main object in making this huge offensive was not simply to win ground, but to put out of action as many Germans as we possibly could. A wise general keeps always in his mind's eye the main business of war—namely, to destroy the forces of the enemy. When the opposing army has been rendered powerless the spoils fall to the victor as a natural consequence. The real object of our great assault was well described by a French officer on the second day of the fighting. Pointing to the German dead that thickly strewed the ground, he said, "That is the purpose of the battle. We do not want guns, for Krupp can make them faster than we can take them. But Krupp cannot make men."

CHAPTER VIII.

HOW CONTALMAISON AND OVILLERS FELL.

YOU will remember that the part of the line which had so far defied us was the sector from Gommecourt to Ovillers. We had made some progress towards La Boisselle, but it was not as yet in our hands. You may be sure that our generals were devoting particular attention to this part of the line. They now decided that a big effort should be made to capture Ovillers and La Boisselle, and to push on to Contalmaison, which you will see on the map (p. 63), about two miles east of La Boisselle. I need not remind you that all these villages were fortresses, furnished with deep dug-outs, and supplied with enormous numbers of machine guns. As for Thiepval, we were content to leave it alone for a time. Once we could win the high ground in the rear of La Boisselle, we could shell Thiepval to our hearts' content, and bring about its fall without the necessity of losing large numbers of men in direct attacks.

Early on the morning of Monday, 3rd July, the guns of both sides began a great bombardment. The enemy had not shelled us much during the first two days of the struggle, and our troops found that they could move in moderate safety up to their firing lines. Now, however, the Germans ruthlessly bombarded the villages which we had taken from them, and made a barrage behind the positions which we were attacking, so as to prevent us from sending up reinforcements. We did the same on and behind their positions. Artillery of every kind was engaged, and it is said that the field guns fired almost as rapidly as Maxims. At one spot near the northern end of La Boisselle Wood both British and German shells were falling so fast that they seemed to meet, and to mingle their explosions. A correspondent tells us that " in what was once a village there were dense clouds of smoke, which rose up in columns and then spread out like a torch. In the very centre of the place, which looked like one of Dante's* visions of hell-fire, one of our soldiers was signalling with a flaming torch. The red flame moved backwards and forwards through the wrack of smoke, and was then tossed high as a new burst of shrapnel broke over the place where the signaller stood."

All day our troops worked their way forward towards La Boisselle, winning ground, and losing some of it again as the Germans counter-attacked. The battle ebbed and flowed, but the advantage was with us, and at length the place was partly surrounded. Then hundreds of guns were turned upon it, and high-explosive shells burst so rapidly upon it that the place was hidden in clouds of dense smoke. On Tuesday, the 4th, the fierce and deadly struggle was continued amidst heavy showers of rain and the roar of Nature's thunder. The dusty hollows became quagmires, the trenches roaring torrents, and the ground was clogged with mud. Wounded men were drowned, and their hale comrades had hard work to make headway. Nevertheless they struggled on over the sodden ground and up the slippery slopes, biting deeper and deeper into the defence.

That evening our men fought their way into La Boisselle, and some two hundred and fifty of the defenders who had survived the awful bombardment came out to meet them with yellow faces and uplifted hands. One machine gunner refused to surrender, and, though he had nine wounds, continued to work his deadly weapon until he was overpowered and made prisoner. Elsewhere a whole gun team lay dead ; a single shell had destroyed them.

Wednesday was another day of fierce fighting, during which our men had to meet many determined counter-attacks. Nevertheless they were able to strengthen their positions and creep forward. The struggle had now continued for five days, and on the evening of the fifth day Sir Douglas Haig was able to announce that we had captured in all more than six thousand prisoners. Next day the 3rd Prussian Guard was flung into the fight, and the struggle grew even more furious. All

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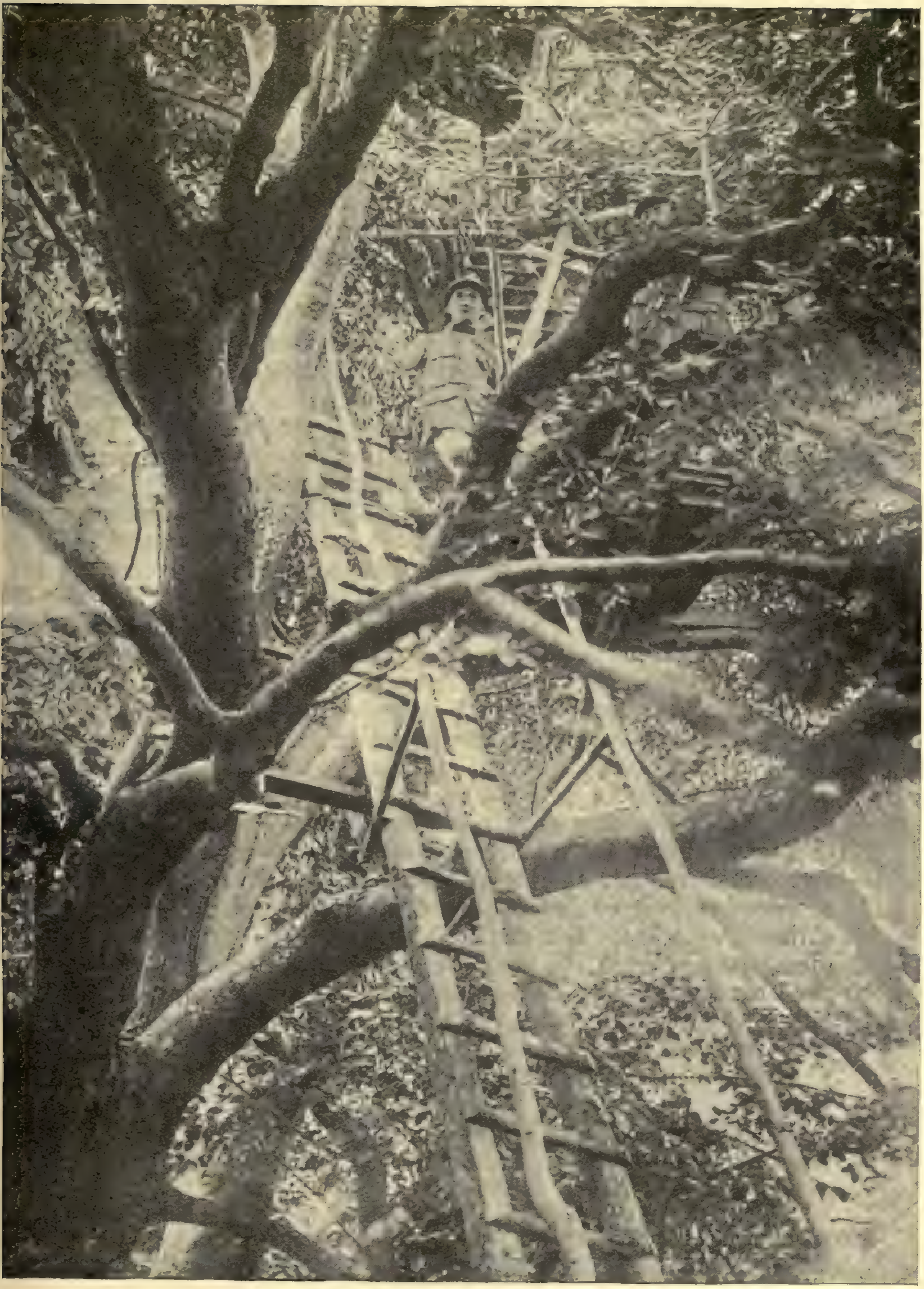
* Dante Alighieri (1265–1321), the greatest poet of Italy. His chief work is a poem describing an imaginary journey from earth to Paradise and then through the lower regions.



The Look-out: a French Observation Post in a Tree.

(*French official photograph.*)

A leafy tree with open ground in view from its upper branches makes an excellent "crow's nest" look-out. The French Staff frequently made use of such observing stations.

Thursday and Friday a ding-dong battle raged from Thiepval to Contalmaison. To the south of Thiepval lay the Leipzig Redoubt. It was a very strong work, on which the enemy had lavished all his skill and energy for twenty months. We made many fierce attacks upon this redoubt, and our trenches were pushed closer and closer to it.

That night the whole front, from the Ancre to the Somme, seemed to be ablaze. Jets of fire issued from the muzzles of countless guns; shrapnel lit up the landscape with orange flashes, high-explosive shells flung aloft masses of flame, and star shells burst in cascades of white and green and red. The enemy heavily bombarded our new positions, but we flung back ten shells for every one that he hurled upon us.

Next day we made our first big attack on Contalmaison. Two brigades were pushed forward, the one up the "Sausage" * valley, the other from the woods to the north-east of Fricourt. At the same time our artillery literally smothered the village with shells. As the Prussian Guards advanced in counter-attack, shoulder to shoulder, our guns caught them and worked awful havoc amongst them. The front ranks were mown down as with a scythe, and dead and dying lay piled, the one on the other, in ghastly heaps. One battalion was almost entirely destroyed. Nevertheless the survivors rallied and re-formed, and with wonderful courage struggled on through the hurricane of fire. As they drew near our lines the guns lifted, and our men, chiefly Lancashire and other north-country troops, swept their ranks with rifle and machine-gun fire. Then they charged, and fierce hand-to-hand struggles took place. For a time the issue of the conflict was in doubt, but the arrival of supports turned the scale in our favour, and before long the Prussian Guard—the choicest troops of all Germany—were falling back in utter rout. The guns pursued them, and as they retreated hundreds of them fell. On that red day the Guards lost 3,000 men, and some seven hundred were taken prisoners.

A British soldier who played his part in this terrible fight thus describes the defeat of the Prussian Guards:—

"What I shall always remember most about the fierce counter-attack made upon us by the Prussian Guard east of Contalmaison, after we had

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* See trench map, p. 22.

made a splendid advance, is the immense number with which they pushed forward to the assault, and the terrific yells they uttered as they came on. . . . It was a strange sight to see such big fellows howling at the top of their voices. They were all giants ; not one of them could have been under six feet two inches, much bigger in the main than our Life Guards. In size they could have eaten us little chaps ; but we weren't afraid of them. We could see as they got closer that they were mostly new troops, for their helmets, uniforms, and equipment were brand-new, and there was a lack of that easiness which you associate with seasoned soldiers. They didn't carry heavy haversacks as we do when we advance ; that was so that they could run all the better.

" I never witnessed such an awful spectacle in my life as that which happened about a hundred yards from our positions. Our artillery had been heavily shelling the ground over which the enemy must pass, and as these fellows, pressing forward, neared our line, a perfect hurricane of shells smashed into them, knocking the big chaps over like ninepins. The ground was simply heaped with dead before they reached us. Then a ding-dong fight took place, which looked at one time like turning out critical for us ; but reinforcements came along. Our fresh troops heavily counter-attacked, and drove the great fellows back, taking a plentiful yield of dead. Before that we had mightily cut into them with rifle and machine-gun fire.

" In hand-to-hand fighting the crack Germans were not much class. Their hearts were in the wrong place, and we got at least seven hundred prisoners. They were not the same Prussian Guard that we had up against us at the beginning of the war."

An officer of the Gordons thus describes the marching back of the prisoners :—

" It was the finest thing I ever saw in my life. . . . I saw six hundred Boches of all ranks marching in column of route across the open back towards our rear. They were disarmed, of course, and what do you think they had for escort ? Three ragged Jocks of our battalion, all blood and dirt and rags, with their rifles at the slope, doing a sort of G.O.C.'s inspection parade march, like pipers at the head of a battalion. That was good enough for me. I brought up the rear, and that's how I got to the dressing station and had my arm dressed. I walked behind a six-hundred-strong column of Boches, but I couldn't equal the swagger of these three Jocks in the lead."

It is said that some of the German prisoners were so much impressed by the dash of their captors that they asked, " Whom are we up against—Guards ? " To which our men made the proud reply, " No ; simply Kitchener's." The officer who related the incident added, " You should have seen the Boches stagger when they received this information ! "

Nothing shows more clearly the importance which the enemy attached to Contalmaison than the sending of these picked troops against us. Their destruction sealed the fate of the village. Contalmaison was terribly strong. It stood at the southern end of the Pozières ridge, every nook and cranny of which had its nest of machine guns. The approaches were defended by a labyrinth of trenches, studded with redoubts, and all round were woods and copses in which Germans were strongly posted. Our men carried a redoubt to the south-west of the village, and another body, after a repulse, seized a similar work on the eastern side. A third redoubt on the edge of a small wood to the south-west changed hands time after time, and not until the machine guns which were holding up our advance had been knocked out were our men able to push forward. About noon they forced their way into the battered streets, and happily were able to set free a small party of Tyneside Scottish who had entered the village but had been captured four days previously.

Contalmaison was in our hands, but our possession of it was short-lived. There were dug-outs which had escaped notice, and from these machine gunners emerged and swept " Sausage Valley " so fiercely that the troops in the village could not be reinforced. The German artillery also began shelling the place heavily, and towards evening they launched a strong counter-attack. Our men were worn out ; they were drenched to the skin, and were quite unfit to fight another battle. They therefore withdrew to a slight rise at the southern corner of the village, and there maintained themselves while the trenches and redoubts and fortified woods in the immediate neighbourhood were being slowly won one by one. When this was done Contalmaison could no longer be held by the enemy. On the night of the 10th our men advanced in four successive waves from a wood on the west side. They broke into the north-west corner of the village, swept round to the north, and after a bitter hand-to-hand struggle captured the whole place. Contalmaison had permanently passed into our hands.

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Meanwhile we had made some progress along the Bapaume road east of La Boisselle, and had taken most of the Leipzig Redoubt. A glance at the map will show you that by this time Ovillers was almost surrounded. The guns had levelled it with the ground, and nothing could be seen of the once smiling village but mounds of debris. But under the ground it was honeycombed with caverns and tunnels like the catacombs [*] of ancient Rome. Secure against our shell fire, the Germans waited below, ready to dash out with machine gun and grenade directly the artillery lifted and our infantry advanced.

We attacked Ovillers from the front and from the flank. The troops which made the frontal attack pushed across five hundred yards of sodden ground and flooded shell holes, and gained a footing in the village, where savage fighting went on all through the night. All the next day the struggle continued amidst the battered trenches and the heaps of rubble. Some of the dug-outs had been opened up by our artillery fire, but most of them were intact, and from them emerged machine gunners and bombers, who made a desperate resistance. Every yard of ground had to be fought for. There were death grapples in the deep cellars and tunnels, and many deeds of heroism were done on both sides. One of our young officers, followed by a couple of men, charged a machine gun that was doing deadly mischief, and knocked out gun and team with a well-aimed bomb.

Ovillers was a terribly hard nut to crack, but now that it was surrounded its fall was certain sooner or later. Day by day our men persevered in the deadly and difficult work of hunting the Germans out of their holes and lairs. On Monday, the 17th, the remnants of the garrison—two officers and 124 Guardsmen—surrendered. By this time, however, our main attack had swept far to the east.

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In a letter to a wounded friend at home an officer gave the following description of the ground which had now been won :—

> " I suppose it would seem nothing to other people, but you, who were here with us through all those dismal winter months, will understand how thrilling it was to be able to walk about on that ground in broad daylight smoking one's pipe. You remember how our chaps used to risk their lives in the early days for such silly souvenirs as nose caps and that kind of thing. You could gather them by the cartload now, and Boche caps and buttons, and bits of uniform and boots, and broken rifles and odd tags of equipment—cartloads of it. To other folk, and on the maps, one place seems just like another, I suppose; but to us—La Boisselle and Ovillers—my hat! Not one of those broken walls we knew so well (through our

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[*] Underground vaults and galleries near Rome, which served as burial places for the early Christians.

"Mercy, Kamerad!" Germans surrendering

(*From drawing by S. Begg. By permission*

Our illustration shows the surrender of the remnants of a battalion of the 186th Prussian Regiment
enduring it for fifteen minutes, the survivors scrambled out of their trenches and advanced holding up
battalion had been accounted for. See pp. 74–75.

to the British during the "Great Push."

of The Illustrated London News.)

which had been hurried from the railhead to the trenches and there subjected to a murderous fire. After their hands. Twenty officers and six hundred men surrendered ; the rest were dead or dying. The whole glasses) is standing now, and only a few jagged spikes where the trees were.

"I went along the 'sunken road' all the way to Contalmaison. Talk about sacred ground! When I think what that No Man's Land was to us for nearly a year! The new troops coming up now go barging across it in the most light-hearted way. They know nothing about it. It means no more to them than the roads behind used to mean to us. It's all *behind* to them, and never was the front. But when I think how we watered every yard of it with blood and sweat! Children might play on it now, if it didn't look so much like the aftermath of an earthquake. But, you know, there's a kind of wrench about seeing the new chaps swagger over it so carelessly, and seeing it gradually merged into the 'behind the line' country. I have a sort of feeling it ought to be marked off somehow as a permanent memorial.

"You remember that old couple who had a blacksmith's shop at ——. The wife was down at the corner by —— the other night, when I came along with half the platoon. I found her wringing the hands of some of our stolid chaps, and couldn't make it out. Then she told me, half sobbing, how she and her husband owned a couple of fields just beyond our old front line, and how she wanted to thank us for getting them back. Think what those fields must have been in the spring of 1914, and what they are to-day—every yard of them torn by shells, burrowed through and through by old trenches and dug-outs; think of the hundreds of tons of wire, sandbags, timber, galvanized iron, duckboards, steel, iron, bully-beef tins, old trench boots, field dressings, cartridge cases, rockets, wire stanchions and stakes, gas gongs, bomb boxes, broken canteens, bits of uniforms, and buried soldiers and Boches—all in the old lady's two little fields! Think how she must have felt, after two years, to know we'd got them back! She's walked over them by now, I dare say."

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We must now turn to the southern sector and see how our men cleared out the fortified woods which lay between them and the German second line. Turn to the map (page 63), and notice the ridge which runs in front of Fricourt and behind Montauban. This ridge looks down into a shallow trough which our men called Caterpillar Valley, and beyond it the ground rises to the ridge which forms the skyline. To the north-west of Montauban you will see the big Mametz Wood, and to the north-east the pear-shaped woods of Bernafay and Trônes.* On Monday, 3rd July, we began the work of capturing these difficult and dangerous areas. That day we cleared the approaches to the Mametz Wood. The Germans at once prepared a counter-attack, and for the purpose brought a new division from Champagne. One of the battalions of the

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* On the British maps the wood is spelt Trônes (thrones), but on the French War Office map, Troncs—that is, the trunk wood.

186th Prussian Regiment was rushed from the railhead directly to the trenches. As the men left the communication trenches and entered certain wide, shallow trenches, our artillery observers discovered them, and immediately a murderous shrapnel fire was rained upon them. For fifteen awful minutes death stalked among them, and then they could stand it no longer. When the remnant saw our soldiers approaching they scrambled over their parapets and ran towards them, holding up their hands in sign of surrender. A whole battalion had been destroyed or made prisoner. Twenty officers and 600 men gave themselves up ; the rest were dead or dying.

By midday on 4th July we had won the wood of Bernafay, and before the day was over had well established ourselves in a wood 3,000 yards in front of Mametz village. A very grim struggle took place in the Bernafay woods, which were thick with a tangled undergrowth of wild strawberry, and had not been thinned for two seasons. The Germans had filled the place with redoubts, which were connected by concealed trenches, and had even installed machine guns in the trees. Our men had to fight for every step in this briery labyrinth, and all the time machine guns spat death at them and shells rained down upon them. The fighting in the wood was almost like the combats you read of in the old days of Redskin warfare. Man fought with man, but in the end British doggedness prevailed.

On 8th July we got our first foothold in the wood of Trônes, thanks largely to the flanking fire of the French guns on our right. We took 130 prisoners, and broke up repeated counter-attacks; but for the next five days the wood was the hottest corner in the whole of the southern sector. Slowly but surely we pushed north. On the night of Sunday, 9th July, the Germans began a series of the most determined attempts to rob us of our gains. Five attacks were beaten off, but the sixth, which took place on Monday afternoon, succeeded in winning back a bit of the wood. We welcomed these attacks, for they suited our purpose exactly. Every time the Germans advanced our artillery swept them down in swathes.

Fighting in the woods continued all day on Tuesday. Early in the afternoon a battalion of a famous Welsh regiment, along with other troops, made a series of short, sharp rushes, keeping time with the artillery, which shelled the ground ahead of them as they advanced. By the end of the day the wood was ours, all but the extreme north corner.

On the same day we approached the north end of Mametz Wood, and captured a dump of German stores. You will understand how strong and stubborn the defence was when I tell you that the winning of a few hundred yards of ground meant the capture of several hundred prisoners. By Wednesday, 12th July, the whole of the wood was in our hands. Perhaps you think the capture of a wood of 200 acres a small thing to boast of ; but you will alter your opinion when you learn that the whole area was a mass of interlaced barbed wire, and was honeycombed with trenches which bristled with machine guns. The strip on the north side was a perfect death-trap : the trenches were thick with mortars, and machine-gun fire enfiladed every direction in which an advance could be made. Make no mistake : the capture of Mametz Wood was a very fine feat of arms ; those acres of woodland were only won after a very grim struggle and the loss of much gallant life. At four o'clock in the afternoon of Wednesday we broke out of the wood, and found ourselves face to face with the main German position.

By this time the Trônes Wood had become a Tom Tiddler's ground in a very real sense. Both sides strove for it, but neither side could hold it for any length of time. When we pushed into it the Germans shelled us out ; and when they gained a footing amidst the tangle of broken trees and the mounds of tumbled earth, our guns speedily drove them back to their trenches again.

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Before I conclude this account of the first stage of the great Somme battle, I must tell you how the French fared in their section of the line, which extended from Maricourt to the Somme, and then ran south to Estrées,* on the old Roman road which you see crossing the map like a pair of ruled parallel lines. Let me remind you that on their nine-mile front the French had a much easier task than we had. They caught the enemy unawares. Half an hour before their attack began, the Germans facing them had been told that Verdun was about to fall, and that all danger of a French offensive on the Somme was over.

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* *Ess-tray.*

The French did their work very methodically. Their heavy guns mercilessly pounded the German trenches, and then the 75's plastered them with shells. When it was supposed that no Germans were left alive, a line of skirmishers was sent forward to see what damage had been done. When they reported that little or no resistance was to be expected, the whole line went forward to occupy the position. This was the German method at Verdun; but the French made a far better job of it.

By 3rd July the French had blasted their way into the German second position south of the Somme, and by the next day had won a point in the third line. A day later they held the best part of Estrées, and were only three miles from Péronne. Counter-attacks were launched against them, but they all failed, and the Germans were forced to shift their railhead back from Péronne to a place in the rear. On the night of Sunday, 9th July, the French seized Biaches,* and Péronne was only half a mile away. They were closing in upon it on the north side of the river as well, though not so quickly. On the 11th they stormed Hill 97, which is over against Péronne, on the left bank of the river to the south-east of Biaches. The farm at the summit was seized, and with this success the first stage of the French offensive came to an end. South of the river they had wholly carried the German second line, and in some places had got beyond it; but north of the river they were not yet in full possession of the second line, though they had won some important points in it.

The French had done splendidly, and their British allies were loud in their praise. The total French captures amounted to 235 officers, 11,740 men, with 85 guns, 89 machine guns, and 26 trench mortars. Everywhere their troops had fought with great dash and determination, and had beaten back all the counter-attacks made upon them. They had captured more ground in ten days than the Germans had won at Verdun in four and a half months.

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So ends the first stage of the "Great Push." In the north part of the line from Gommecourt to Thiepval we had not succeeded, but south of Thiepval we had bitten deeply into the

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* *Be-ash.*

The Royal West Kents holding the Trônes Wood against repeated German Attacks.

(*From the drawing by H. W. Koekkoek. By permission of The Illustrated London News.*)

At dusk on the night of 13th July a small force of West Kents found themselves cut off in the eastern part of the wood, with Germans swarming around them. They dug themselves in, and all night long, against tremendous odds, they resisted attack after attack. They held the position until relieved at 8 a.m. on the following morning.

German defences. We had drawn to the Somme most of the German reserves, and we had made havoc of them.

When Napoleon's generals came to him and announced a victory, the first question which he asked was not how many men they had killed, but how many prisoners they had taken. He believed that prisoners were the real test of victory. The dead can be miscounted, but the living are there to answer for themselves. On the 17th of July, the day on which Ovillers fell, Sir Douglas Haig reported that his troops had captured 189 officers and 10,779 men since 1st July. Seventeen heavy guns and howitzers, thirty-seven field guns, thirty trench mortars, sixty-six machine guns, had also been taken, besides others not then brought in. If prisoners, as Napoleon thought, are the test of victory, France and Britain had good cause to rejoice at their success on the Somme.

I have already told you that British and French aviators won the mastery of the air during this part of the "Great Push." German aeroplanes were rarely seen over the Allies' lines, and the German captive balloons, which were used as observation posts, were almost all destroyed in the first day of the battle. The airmen who were engaged in directing and correcting the fire of the artillery did most valuable service. In almost every dispatch General Haig mentioned their daring and success.

When you come to measure the gains upon the map, you may think that our progress was slow. Please remember that our first and foremost object was to put as many of the enemy as possible out of action, not to win ground. From the first it was known that no startling progress would be made. We went to work methodically, making quite sure of our gains, and not leaving anything to chance. Except in the Mametz and Trônes woods, where the counter-attacks of the Germans enabled them to win back for a brief time part of their losses, we nowhere gave up an inch of ground that we had gained. It was this steady and continuous success which was the most hopeful feature of the struggle.

We had at last got the upper hand of the Germans in artillery and in the supply of shells, and had full assurance that we could easily maintain our lead. Our guns outclassed and outdistanced those of the enemy, and every day we were growing in artillery strength. On the field of battle the lessons of Neuve Chapelle and Loos had been taken to heart, and we had abandoned for good and all those rash and unsupported rushes into the enemy's lines which had cost us so dear and had proved so fruitless. Our company officers had shown excellent leading. They had kept their men well in hand until the big guns had done their work, and had let them loose at the right time and in the right place. The men had fought heroically, and, like Wellington's soldiers in the Peninsula, were ready to go anywhere and do anything. At close quarters they had proved themselves far superior to the best German soldiers that could be brought against them. And this was all the more remarkable because most of them a few months previously had been peaceful citizens, with little or no knowledge of war, and no desire whatever to take up arms against their fellow-men. In the long days of peace certain gloomy souls repeatedly told us that the old fighting spirit of Britain had departed. But the Battle of the Somme proved clearly that in no period of Britain's history were her sons so fearless and so devoted. The enemy had boasted loudly that his soldiers were invincible. He could do so no longer.

CHAPTER IX.

THE STRUGGLE FOR THE SLOPES.

DURING the fighting which I have described in the preceding chapters our men were slowly pushing their way uphill. Let us suppose that we are standing on a little elevation just in front of Bray, and that we are looking northward. What do we see ? Our view is shut in by the main watershed, which rises and falls along the skyline from the west to a little south of south-east. This watershed is about ten miles long, and is nowhere more than five hundred feet above the level of the sea. It is composed of a stiff yellowish clay, and is dotted on the nearer sides with the ruins of a dozen villages, a few lonely farms, and six or seven thick woods of irregular shape which look like patches of fenced cover in a bare park.

The country across which we are looking rises in three terraces to the watershed. Below us is the first terrace, and on the second we see the battered remains of the German trenches, with the ruins of Fricourt and Mametz beside them, and Montauban on the rising ground beyond. On the slopes of the broad third terrace behind Montauban we can trace the general direction of the second German line of defence, running from Pozières, past Bazentin-le-Grand and Longueval,* to Guillemont.† With the help of a field-glass we can make out on the wooded skyline above Pozières some points in the German third line. The windmill above Thiepval is one such point ; High Wood is another. Martinpuich,‡ the chief village on the third terrace, is on the edge of the descending slope, and is hidden from our eyes by the summit of the ridge.

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We are aiming at the skyline. Once we stand upon it, with the German trenches in our possession, we shall look down the far slope of the whole range into the little valley formed by the upper waters of the Ancre as they flow westward. We shall have a clear view right across to Bapaume, and we shall be able to spy out all the positions of the enemy for many a mile.

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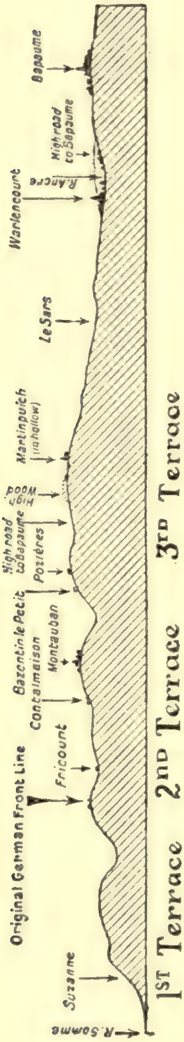
* *Lon-ghe-val.* † *Ghee-ye-mon* (*n* nasal). ‡ *Mar-tan-pweek.*

I think you will be able to understand the lie of the country better if you examine this diagram. It is a section—that is, the side view—of a cutting right through the country from the original German front line to and beyond Bapaume. You can easily see that while the enemy was seated on the ridge he could not only overlook our lines and direct his artillery against them, but that he had behind him an easy slope up which to bring his guns, supplies, and men. We, on the other hand, had to fight our way up hill and down dale.

I have already told you how we won Fricourt, Contalmaison, and Montauban, and captured the second terrace. The heavy task now before us was to carry the four-mile stretch of fortified village and wood from Pozières to Longueval—that is, to capture the slopes of the third and last terrace. In certain places, as at Contalmaison Villa and the Mametz Wood, we were within a few hundred yards of the enemy's line. But in the section from Bazentin-le-Grand to Longueval we had to push up the slopes north of the Caterpillar Valley for about 1,200 yards. On the extreme right we were not at this time complete masters of the Trônes Wood, and our men had to assemble on ground swept by the enemy's fire. A French general told a British general that we were going to try to do the impossible; but the British general replied that if we did not succeed he would eat his hat.



The day fixed for the attack was 14th July, the day on which France makes holiday every year in honour of the fall of the Bastille * and the beginning of the revolution that gave her

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* Vol. I., p. 49.

freedom from the tyranny of her kings and nobles. It was a day of good omen, and it was celebrated in Paris by a procession of the Allies. Along the boulevards, line after line, marched Belgian, Russian, British, and French troops, signifying to the world their brotherhood in arms. The Paris crowds cheered wildly as the ranks filed past; but they broke into the loudest roar of all as the Scottish pipers, playing the airs of Old Gaul, swung by. Our soldiers in Picardy all knew that it was France's Day, and they pushed forward against the Germans with loud cries of "Vive la France!" in every variety of accent. The victory which they meant to win that day was their offering to the French people, whom they had learned to know and respect in farm and village, trench and town.

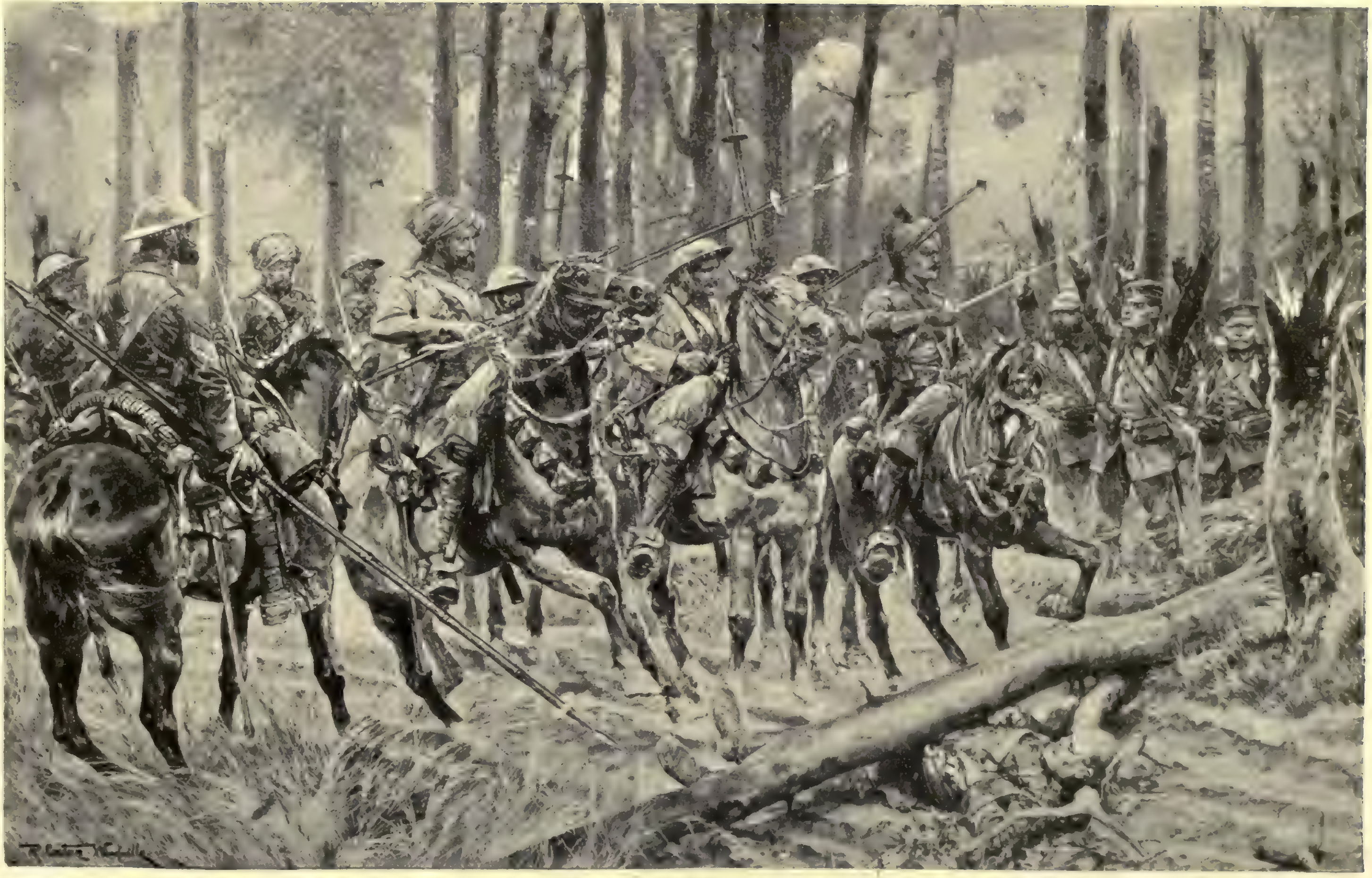
Many of the positions which we held had only been won on the previous day, and the Trônes Wood, as you know, was not yet cleared. The enemy hoped that we should be so busy strengthening our newly won lines that they would have a few days' respite. They were soon to be undeceived. In the small hours of the morning of 14th July our guns began a fierce bombardment, which has thus been described:—

> "Our batteries were firing with intense fury. . . . The sky and the ridges of ground, and the earthworks and ruins and woods across our lines, were blazing with the flashes of bursting shells. . . . Along the German second line, by Bazentin-le-Grand, Bazentin-le-Petit, and Longueval, at the back of the woods, our shells were bursting without a second's pause, and in great clusters. They tore up the ground, and let out gusts of fire. The dark night was rent with flames, and hundreds of batteries were feeding the fires."

Another observer noticed that, amid all the clamour and shock, both in the darkness and as dawn grew into day, the larks sang overhead.

> "Only now and then would the song be audible; but whenever there was an interval between the roaring of the nearer guns, above all the distant tumult the song of the larks came down clear and very beautiful by contrast. Nor was the lark the only bird that was awake, for close by us, somewhere in the dark, a quail kept constantly urging us—or the guns—to be *Quick-be-quick.*"

As the first glimmer of dawn showed in the eastern sky the sweating gunners worked like inspired giants, and flung a perfect hurricane of shells upon the German positions. About 3.20



Indian Cavalry in Action on the Outskirts of Delville Wood.

(*By permission of The Illustrated London News.*)

A troop of Dragoon Guards and a troop of the Deccan Horse swooped down on German infantry in the cornfields near Bazentin and on the outskirts of Deville Wood. At the sudden coming of the Indians the Germans thought only of surrendering; but would their lives be spared? "My comrades were afraid," said a German sergeant. "They cried out to me that the Indians would kill them if they surrendered. I said, 'That is not true, comrades; it is only a tale. Let us go forward very quietly with our hands up.' So we did, and I spoke to one of the there was a sudden hush. Five minutes later the awful uproar began again; the guns had lifted, and were creating a curtain of fire behind the German trenches. In the brief interval our men had scrambled over their parapets, and were pushing their way across the No Man's Land. Then from the enemy's trenches came the rattle of machine guns, and a few minutes later the crash of shells. The fire, however, was not so fierce or so accurate as it had been on 1st July, and it altogether failed to stem the British onrush. At 10.40 a.m. Sir Douglas Haig was able to telegraph home the cheering news: "Our troops have broken into the hostile positions on a front of four miles, and have captured several strongly defended localities."

The attack had failed nowhere. In some parts of the line our men advanced quicker than in other parts, but by the afternoon all the positions attacked were in our hands. The fiercest fighting was on the extreme right, where the Sussex and other battalions advanced against that part of the Trônes Wood which the Germans still held. At seven o'clock on the previous evening (13th July) we had unsuccessfully assaulted this section of the wood, and a hundred men of the Royal West Kents had been cut off from the rest of their battalion. They had machine guns and Lewis guns,* and plenty of ammunition, and they determined to make a fight for it. Their captain organized them very skilfully, and several points were fortified. All night long the West Kents held out against tremendous odds, and not only did they beat off the enemy, but they managed to capture thirty-five prisoners. It was Rorke's Drift all over again.

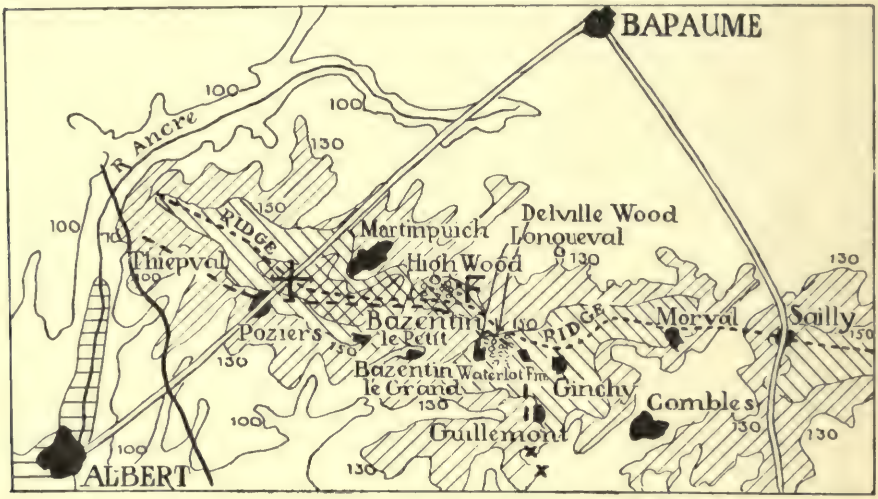
At eight in the morning the Sussex and other battalions arrived, and, thanks to the dogged resistance of the heroic West Kents, were able to make rapid headway. "The wood," wrote a correspondent, "was captured again; and then a queer kind of miracle happened, and it seemed as if those who had been dead had come to life again. For out of holes in the ground, and from behind the fallen timbers of shelled trees, there came a number of English boys, dirty and wild looking, who shouted out, 'Hullo, lads! What cheer, matey?' . . . They were

* The Lewis gun is an automatic gun shaped like a rifle, and capable of being carried by a man. It is continuously supplied with cartridges, forty-eight of which are ranged on a circular pan which rotates above the breech. A loader fills the pans, which can be attached to the gun in a few seconds.

West Kents, who had been caught in a barrage of fire. With one officer, they had dug themselves into the roots of trees on the eastern edge of the wood, and had kept the Germans at bay."*

The Trônes Wood was not won without hand-to-hand fighting of the most desperate character. In several places British and German soldiers were found lying side by side, each pierced with the other's bayonet. In the trees German machine gunners were discovered hanging limply across the branches. The whole wood was a charnel house.

Famous Highland regiments and a South African brigade advanced against Longueval. They had to cross 1,200 yards of open ground under a very heavy machine-gun fire from the front and the flank. Many men fell; but the rest pushed on, only to discover that the wire entanglements had not been cut by our guns. Fired by the skirl of the pipes, they hacked their way through the wire, and swept down upon the German trenches like a winter torrent of their own wild hills. Some of the Prussians fought fiercely, but they could not resist the Highland onset. A Prussian officer came up from one of the dug-outs with a great axe in his hand, and in good English called out to a sergeant that he wished to surrender. When told to drop his axe, he changed his mind, and hurled it at the head



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* The incident is illustrated on p. 78.

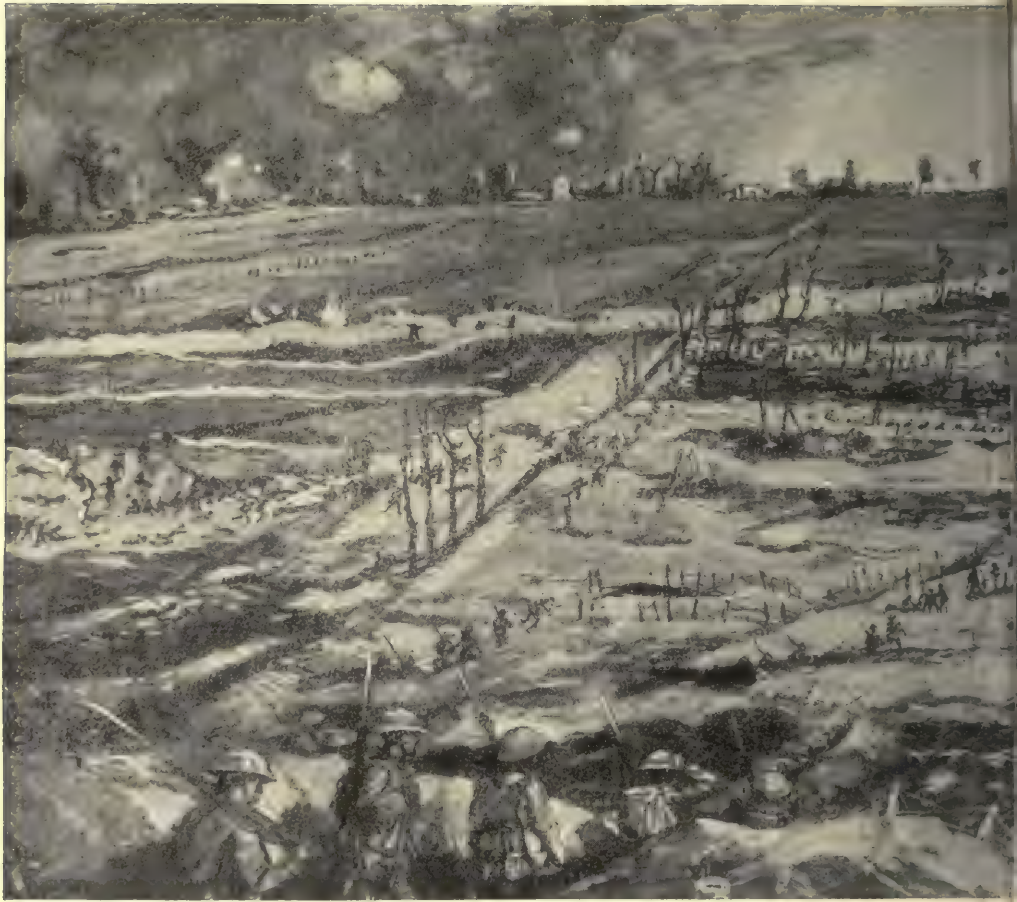
of a sergeant, who dodged the weapon, and, enraged at this cowardly trick, promptly bayoneted him.

Longueval was entered shortly afterwards, and the " kilties " were at once assailed by machine guns hidden in the ruined houses. In one broken building six of these weapons were firing through holes in the wall. Our men rushed the place with grenades, and in half an hour had overcome all resistance above ground. They had still, however, to dispose of those who had taken refuge underground. Some of them fought like wolves at bay, and in the dim light of passages and cellars fierce combats took place. Before evening, however, the whole place was in our hands. The Highlanders were eager to push forward to Delville Wood, three hundred yards to the north-east of the village, but were unable to do so because our guns were still shelling the outskirts. When, however, they lifted, our men moved forward.

The two Bazentins, to the west of Longueval, were carried easily. The bigger of the villages had been almost utterly destroyed by our guns, and only heaps of bricks and twisted iron showed where the church and houses had stood. The Germans made but little resistance, and when our men entered the village, came up out of their dug-outs and surrendered in shoals. Many of them believed that they would be killed, and they offered our soldiers watches, pocket-books, helmets, and other belongings as ransom for their lives. After the awful bombardment which they had suffered, they seemed glad to be in British hands, and they readily helped to carry back our wounded.

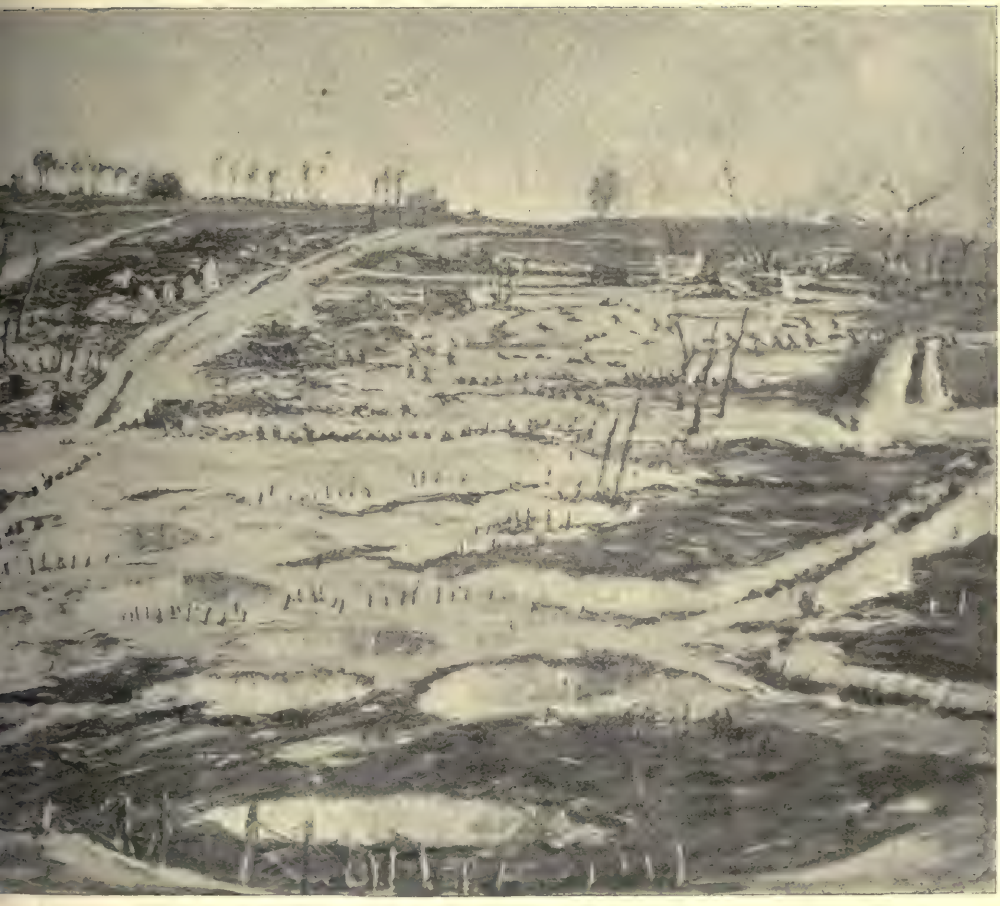
By the evening of the 14th we had captured the whole German line from Bazentin-le-Petit to Longueval, and in the twenty-four hours' battle had taken over 2,000 prisoners, many of them belonging to the 3rd Division of the German Guards. A striking success had been won, and the French general who thought the operation impossible sent word to the British general who was sure that it would succeed that he need not eat his hat.

Next day, Saturday, 15th July, we were busy strengthening the ground which had been won. There was, however, severe fighting in the wood to the west of Bazentin-le-Petit. The enemy had fortified a strong position more or less parallel with the Albert-Bapaume road, and behind it was putting up a strong


Pozières Church.
Windmill.
Albert-Bapaume main road.

The British approaching Pozières.

The first stage in the attack on Pozières was to clear the enemy out of La Boisselle ; this was a long
and our men had to advance across storm-swept ground. Even after the village had been entered it was
ment was in progress the two hundred and fifty or more Germans who held the ruins were without food
extremely difficult. The defenders of the village were able to sweep all the country below it with machine-
and getting astride of it. The troops engaged had to clear the ground up to the main German trenches
above) and entered from the south-east. Pozières was entered on 23rd July soon after midnight, and
cap. It was, so far, the finest achievement of the Great Push." Behind the plateau on which the eastern
therefore, gave us a footing from which we could make further advances at much less expense. For this



Bombing Parties moving to the Attack.

and dangerous operation. The German artillery fire was very heavy on the slopes in front of the village,
a long time before the Germans were turned out of the cellars and dug-outs. While the British bombard-
or water. When they surrendered the attack on Pozières could proceed. The advance on Pozières was
gun fire. Nevertheless the British succeeded in working up along both sides of the Albert-Bapaume road
in front of Pozières on the west side of the village, while the Australians carried the sunken road (see
by the 26th it was wholly in our hands. "The capture of Pozières was a great feather in the British
part of Pozières village stands the ground gently descends towards Bapaume. The capture of Pozières,
reason the Germans offered the fiercest possible resistance both at La Boisselle and Pozières.

resistance. Our men, however, cleared the greater part of the wood, and patrols pushed forward into the High Wood, the highest part of the ridge. They were on the watershed at last.

The Germans soon began their counter-attacks. They shelled the lost positions very heavily, and advanced with wonderful courage against Bazentin-le-Petit, and for a time succeeded in recovering the village. They did not hold it long. By a dashing attack in which our bombers did great execution they drove the Germans out; and though the enemy made two other attempts to oust us, both failed.

Now comes a surprising incident. For many pages of this record you have heard nothing of cavalry on the Western front, except when acting as infantry in the trenches. Most persons believed that until the trench war was over, horse soldiers would have no chance whatever of coming to grips with the enemy. Had you told our "foot sloggers" that in the very midst of trench warfare cavalry would be seen riding down Germans, they would have smiled at you. Yet a cavalry charge actually took place during the struggles which I am describing. In the Champagne battle of September 26, 1915, some squadrons of horse had been used very successfully to sweep up prisoners and capture guns on the ground between the first and second German lines. We now proposed to follow this example. The cavalry which we were about to use consisted of a troop of Dragoon Guards and a troop of Deccan Horse.* Let me tell you the story in the words of an officer who commanded a troop of Deccan Horse:—

"At midnight on Thursday (14th) we got word to move. It was a very chilly night, and as we were half frozen under our blankets and waterproof sheets, we were fairly stiff when we turned out after two hours' rest. We marched off at 1 a.m. to water our horses. We then moved up to ——, where we waited till the afternoon, being treated to about four hours' shelling. At last word came along that we were wanted, and off we set at the canter, crossed the German trenches at ——, and although we were shelled all the way up, we escaped with practically no casualties.

"It was very hard going, and my horse was dead lame. The ground was full of shell holes, and one was in constant danger of breaking one's neck every yard or two. There was also a lot of barbed wire still about. However, when we reached —— we got amongst the Boches, and rounded up several, though subjected to pretty severe machine-gun fire. The men behaved splendidly. When we reached the top of a ridge we had to dismount owing to the heavy machine-gun fire and rifle fire. As it was impossible to advance further mounted, we pushed forward on foot with our rifles, etc., and as showy as possible. By this time the fire from the Germans had greatly increased, and we had a good many men put out of action. However, we kept on advancing.

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* See illustration on p. 84.

"It was a very thin line, as we had a broad front to attack over. Men were being hit on both sides of me. When I was lying on the ground a bullet passed between my chin and the ground, and the continuous hiss, hiss of bullets within an inch or two of one's head made the place exceedingly unhealthy. We were thankful that their shooting was rather wild. Towards 10 p.m. we fell back a few hundred yards to a more favourable position, in order to dig ourselves in, and were then subjected to a severe *strafing* by German shells. They rained around us. However, we held on there till 4 a.m., when we were relieved by infantry.

"We got back to bivouac here at 10 a.m., dead tired, having been on the move thirty-four hours without any food bar a few biscuits and a mouthful of water. It was a tremendous honour for us to be the first cavalry to be used as such on this front, and we got off lightly, all things considered."

Our modest officer tells us very little of the work which he and his comrades actually did. They made their way up the shallow valley beyond Bazentin-le-Grand, finding cover in the slope of the ground and the growing corn. They then rode on into the open country skirting Delville Wood, and were suddenly assailed by a machine gun hidden in a cornfield. The order to charge was given, and with levelled lances they galloped straight through the corn, and rode down the enemy. Then, wheeling round, they charged again. Some of the Germans fixed bayonets and tried to resist; but most of them either took to their heels in fright, or held up their hands, or clung to the stirrup-leathers of the horsemen. Thirty-two prisoners were taken, and about a dozen of the enemy were killed.

The cavalry rode on, and bullets began to hiss amongst them from another field. Before they had time to charge, an unexpected reinforcement appeared. One of our aeroplanes suddenly swooped down until it was barely three hundred feet above the heads of the Germans, and sent a stream of lead into them; whereupon they made off. The cavalry, as you were told above, dug in, and held on until they were relieved. They had done all that was expected of them. Some of the infantry who heard the news wondered whether the end of the long trench fighting was over and the time for open movement had begun. Many months, however, were to elapse before that happy day could arrive.

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The fight for Delville Wood was the fiercest of all. By Saturday evening the whole wood was ours, but the enemy still held certain orchards on the high ground to the north of the village. For four days the Scots and the South African Brigade fought in the wood, and beat back counter-attack after counter-attack, during which desperate hand-to-hand struggles took place. The capture of Longueval and Delville Wood was a very fine feat of arms ; but the four days' defence was even finer. The defenders had little food and water ; they were frightfully shelled ; yet, when their ranks were greatly reduced, they flung back an attack by three of the most famous regiments in the German army. What Ypres was to the Canadians, the steeps of Gallipoli to the Anzacs, and the slopes of Beaumont Hamel to the Newfoundlanders, Delville Wood was to the South Africans—that is, a spot where great honour was won, and many gallant men laid down their lives for the safety, honour, and welfare of the Empire.

During this stage of the battle our men had to meet the best soldiers that Germany could produce. For some days they engaged the 3rd Guards Division, which the Kaiser considered to be the very buttress of his throne. He had brought them from the Russian front, and he believed that they would drive the hastily-trained levies of Britain before them in utter rout. On 20th April, when they arrived in Picardy, the Kaiser thus addressed them : " The enemy has prepared his own soup, and now he must sup it, and I look to you to see to it. May the appearance of the 3rd Guards Division inform him what soldiers are facing him." Our men were not in the least disconcerted when they learnt that they were to face the pick of Germany. They were, indeed, eager to try conclusions with them. You know the result. Though some of the Guards fought gamely at Ovillers, they were no match for the citizen soldiers of Britain.

The 5th Brandenburg Division was also flung into the fight, but it fared no better. You will remember that this division had covered itself with glory at Douaumont and Vaux in the previous February and March. But the men who had done great things in front of Verdun were no longer available. They had nearly all been put out of action, and it was a new division with the old name which appeared on the Somme.

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On Monday, the 17th, as you learnt in Chapter VIII., Ovillers was finally captured, and now all was ready for a great assault on Pozières. That same day we widened the gap in the German front by capturing Waterlot Farm, which you see on the map between Longueval and Ginchy.* By this time the fine weather had gone, and drenching rain was falling. Low mists hung upon the hills, and our airmen could not spy out the many new batteries which the enemy had brought up. While we could not see to range our guns, the Germans had the exact range of every trench which we held, and they were able to shell us very heavily.

By this time we had taken 189 officers and 10,779 men. Of artillery we had captured 17 heavy pieces, 37 field guns, 30 trench mortars, and 66 machine guns. The German losses in dead and wounded were very great; how great we do not know, but certainly the total was equal to the number of our own losses. Letters found in the trenches or taken from prisoners told us that whole battalions of the enemy had been reduced to a handful, and that some of the survivors were either too exhausted to fight again or had completely lost their nerve.

Nevertheless you must not suppose that we were opposed by feeble and spiritless enemies. A young officer said :—

> "The way some of our fellows talk, you might think the Boches were all baby-killers, frightened of their own shadows, and anxious only to be taken prisoners. Well, of course I know there are some like that—a good many, in fact; and in all the British army I don't believe there's one. Anyhow, I've never seen or heard of a British soldier running out with hands up, calling for mercy and giving himself up. Never heard of it, and I saw Boches doing it ; even a Boche officer. But, mind you, the fellows we ran up against fought like tigers. I say they were good soldiers and brave men. When we had the Boche with his back to the wall he fought like a tiger cat. No *kamarad* business about that. They were shying bombs in our faces at point-blank range when our bayonets were absolutely touching 'em."

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Look at the map closely,† and fix in your mind the position of Pozières and Guillemont. Pozières, you observe, is on both sides of the Albert-Bapaume road, about 4½ miles from Albert; and Guillemont is near the Cléry-Bapaume road, about the same distance to the south-east. If we could capture these two villages, the whole of the German second line would be in our hands, and we should be within striking distance of the crest of the ridge. The important points which we were aiming at on the third and last terrace were Mouquet * Farm, between Thiepval and Pozières; the Windmill, on the highroad east of Pozières; and High Wood, to the north of Longueval. The Windmill, which stood on the highest ground of the western part of the terrace, had been shelled, and was by this time a mere broken stump.

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* *Jahn-chee.*

† See p. 86.

On the 19th we tried to carry Guillemont from Trônes Wood, but failed. Next day the French made a fine leap forward both north and south of the Somme. On the north side they advanced beyond the light railway which you see running from Cléry to Combles, and on the south side they carried the whole of the German defences from Barleux † to Villers. For the next two days we bombarded the whole front in preparation for the great infantry attack on Pozières.

About ten o'clock on Sunday, 23rd, the bombardment grew very hot indeed. Our gunners were firing as fast as they could thrust the shells into the breeches, and the sky was ablaze with sudden bursts of flame. About midnight they mercilessly pounded the German trenches in front of Pozières. By this time the village had not a whole house standing, and the trees in the gardens had been smashed to matchwood. Shortly after midnight Midland Territorials and an Australian division were sent forward to the assault. The Midlanders moved from the south-west, and the Australians advanced from the south-east. Let us first follow the Anzacs, who were now about to display the desperate valour that had won them such glory in Gallipoli.

A very difficult task lay before them. They had to capture in the blackness of a dark night a sunken road ‡ to the east of the highway which you see running through the village, then carry a network of trenches, and finally the highway itself. Between their lines and the front German trench lay 550 yards of torn and tumbled ground on which shells were falling thickly, and bullets were hissing like the raindrops of a thunder-shower. Nevertheless the gallant Anzacs stumbled on across the shell-pitted ground, and charged the sunken road with the bayonet. Most of the Germans did not wait for the cold steel, but ran scurrying to the rear. Some, however, fired their rifles or

* *Moo-kay.* † *Bar-lew.*

‡ See illustration, pp. 88–89.

flung their grenades even while the Australians were swarming across their broken parapets. It was greatly to the credit of our men that they spared the lives of those who yielded so tardily.

After very desperate fighting in the ruined houses of the village, the Anzacs won the highroad. During the fighting they did some extraordinary deeds of gallantry, and a famous division of regulars on their flank sent them a message to say that they were proud to fight by their side. In a later chapter I shall tell you how five Australians won the Victoria Cross that day.

Shrapnel and high explosive greeted the Midlanders as they advanced, and a new type of shell was hurled at them. Many of these shells, a correspondent tells us, burst high, and seemed to shoot out flaming torches with trailing feathers of fire. They were liquid-fire shells, meant to burn up the bodies of our men. " They frightened us at first," said a Territorial. " It was as though the stars had suddenly dropped, all on fire. But they didn't do us much harm, and after the first scare we didn't mind them." Other shells dropped with a singing noise, as though a whistle had been attached to them, and burst with a hiss. They were poison-gas shells. Some of our men turned sick, but few died. Most of them hurried forward out of reach of the deadly fumes. As soon as the trenches were reached the Midlanders got to work, and speedily cleared out the Germans. Then they pushed on, and reached a point above the village where they threatened to outflank the enemy.

The Germans hurried up reinforcements, and about midday began a furious counter-attack, during which some of the fiercest hand-to-hand combats known to warfare took place.

> " Both sides," said an officer who took part in the struggle, " went for each other with equal fury. Our men, especially the Australians, met them in the most heroic fashion. Rifles were useless in this horrible encounter; only knives, bayonets, revolvers, and grenades were used. In addition, some of the Germans had long spiked clubs. I saw one of their officers strike one of our wounded men with this brutal weapon; but he had no time to finish his job—a revolver shot stretched him beside his victim.
>
> " In one house a German squad, which was trying to get its machine gun to work, was stricken down with the bayonet to the last man by a party of Australians who broke into the ruins after them. I saw a thrilling duel between two officers. An English lieutenant, charging at the head of his men, found himself face to face with a Bavarian captain. He got home with a sword-stroke, but at the same moment received a revolver ball in

the stomach. Mastering his pain, he was able to give his adversary a deadly thrust. Unfortunately he himself died soon afterwards."

On Monday and Tuesday the battle continued, and by the evening of the latter day most of Pozières was in our hands. By Wednesday morning, 26th July, we were masters of the whole village, and the Territorials and Australians were able to join hands in the north corner, where they occupied the cemetery. A Bavarian battalion, in danger of being outflanked by our advancing troops, tried to retire; but as it did so was caught by the British batteries, and suffered terribly. The village had been defended by more than two hundred machine guns. A fort had been erected in the midst of the ruins, and for twelve hours it held out against our assaults. When at last it was captured only four men out of the sixty-four who held it were found to be alive. The capture of Pozières was a great feather in the British cap. It was so far the finest achievement of the Great Push.

The Germans, however, still held the Windmill on the high ground above, and now began to pour a torrent of shell upon our men in Pozières.

No amount of shelling, however, could drive our men out of the village. On the 27th Sir Douglas Haig was able to announce that, with the exception of the northern outskirts of Longueval, all the villages which we had attacked were in our hands. Our success was due to the magnificent courage and endurance of our infantry, and to the wonderful work of our artillery. You will gather how hard the gunners worked when I tell you that in Picardy alone they flung upon the enemy, in the course of a single month, no less than five million shells.

CHAPTER X.

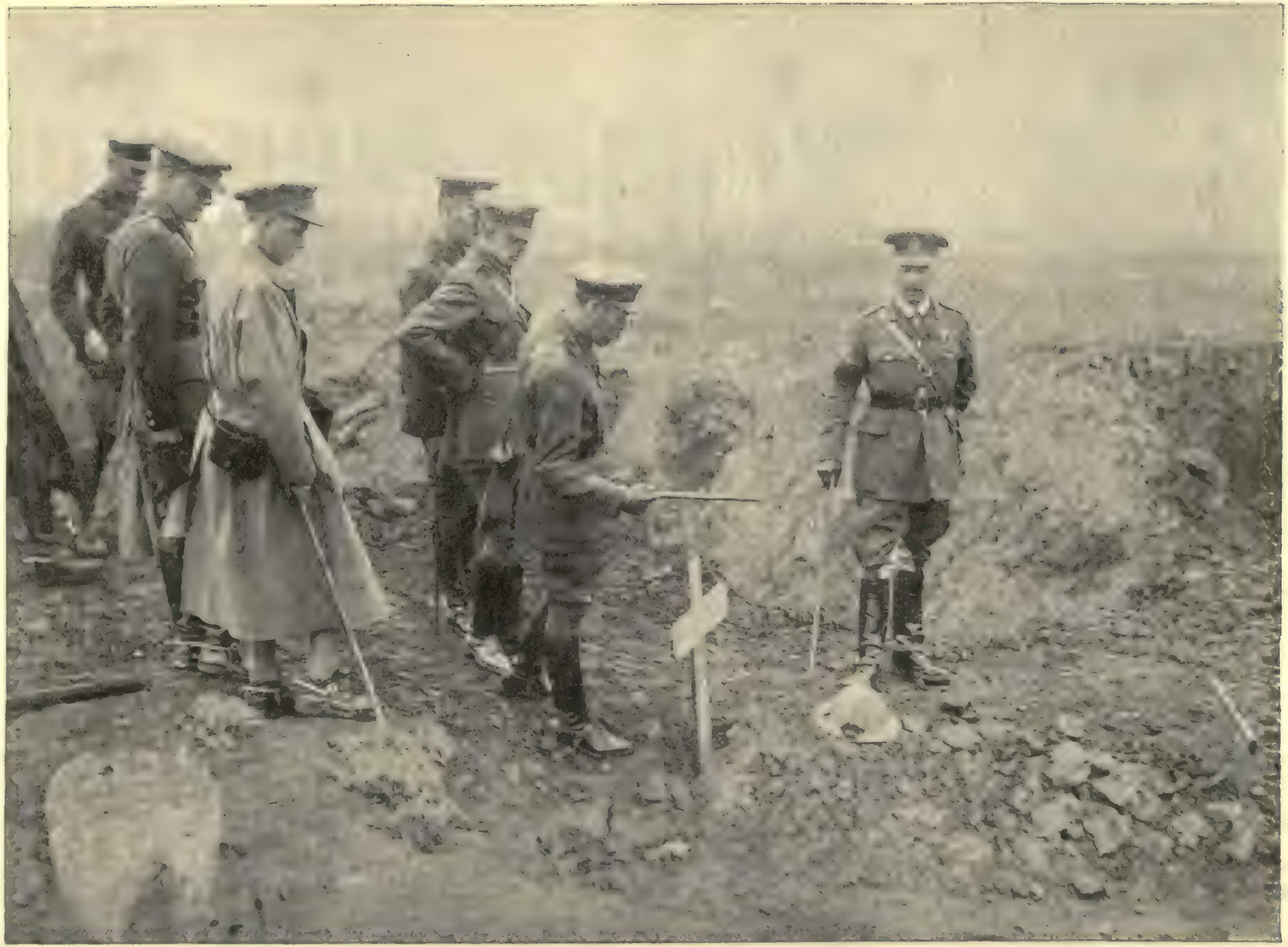
THE FIGHT FOR THE RIDGE.

YOU are now to learn how we won the watershed and found ourselves at last looking down the long, gentle slope to the valley of the upper Ancre, beyond which we could see the town of Bapaume on a lower swell of ground little more than five miles away.

I broke off my story on 27th July, when the Australians were in possession of the village of Pozières. During the last week of July and the first fortnight of August the days were blazing hot, and the roads were thick with dust. Even the Australians, who are accustomed to great heat, found those days very trying, especially as they had to wear steel helmets and carry heavy equipment. Over all the landscape hung a heat haze, which made the work of observation very difficult.

Through the darkness of the early morning of Saturday, the 29th, the Australians made a big effort to capture the Windmill and establish themselves on the summit of the ridge above Pozières. Again there were fierce hand-to-hand fights; but the Australians would not be denied, and when dawn broke they were on the edge of the labyrinth of trenches that defended the coveted position. That same morning we made an advance against Guillemont, and reached the station on the light railway just outside the village.

Already that horrible death-trap Delville Wood had been cleared, and Longueval was in our hands. The enemy made strong counter-attacks against the wood; but as soon as the Germans appeared our guns began to roar, and the attackers were mown down before they could get within close range of our trenches. For five days we contented ourselves with a bombardment of the posts behind the enemy's line; then,



The King with the Prince of Wales and British Officers at the Graveside of a Soldier on the Battlefield.

(*Official Photo.*)

His Majesty paid one of several visits to the front in the second week of August 1916. In front of our old first-line trenches he halted by a wooden cross and read the inscription, "Here lies the body of an unknown British soldier." The King saluted and said, "Some gallant fellow lies there."

on the night of Friday, 4th August, we made a big bid for the Windmill.

You will remember that the Australians were at this time on the edge of the trenches, defending the summit of the ridge. Our guns had been busy for days on these trenches, and by the evening of the 4th had almost wiped them out. At nine o'clock, when there was still plenty of light in the sky, Australians on the right and south England troops on the left suddenly sprang over their parapets and carried the ruined trenches of the enemy at a rush. The attack was a great surprise to the Germans, and before they could recover themselves we were in possession of the Windmill.

All through the night the Germans counter-attacked, but without success. Early on Sunday morning they sprayed our trenches with liquid fire, and won back a small part of their lost line. They were, however, speedily driven out, and we took six hundred prisoners. We were on the watershed at last, and for the first time could overlook the enemy. Nevertheless, perched on that high, bare ridge, we were a splendid mark for the German guns. Night and day they hurled shells at us, and our men were sorely tried. They held on, however, with the doggedness of their race, and beat back all attempts to dislodge them. Meanwhile we were advancing little by little to the right of the highroad. If you look at the map, you will see that our troops in this part of the line were exposed to a flanking fire from Thiepval, and to a frontal fire from the guns at Courcelette.* All that we could do was to win ground yard by yard and repel the many German counter-attacks.

The terrible strain of the fighting was by this time beginning to tell upon the Germans. Hitherto their great war machine had worked wonderfully well ; now it began to show signs of breaking down. We need not wonder that it did so. The Germans were now forced to scrape together reserves from all parts of their line, and to thrust against us battalions which had never before fought together. The Staff work, which had been so good in the past, now seemed to go all to pieces. The various units which advanced in counter-attack often lost direction, and, instead of going forward in waves, one behind the other, as formerly, came on unsupported. The following letter, which was written by a German officer, shows clearly

* *Koor-se-let.*

that the German Staff was no longer doing its work in the old way :—

> "The job of relieving yesterday was incredible. From Courcelette we relieved across the open. Our position, of course, was quite different from what we had been told. Our company alone relieved a full battalion, though we were only told to relieve a company of fifty men weakened through casualties. Those whom we relieved had no idea where the enemy was, how far off he was, or if any of our own troops were in front of us. We had no idea of our supposed position till six o'clock this evening. The English were only four hundred or five hundred yards away, at the Windmill, just over the hill. We shall have to look to it to-night not to get taken prisoners. We have no dug-outs ; we dig a hole in the side of a shell-hole, and lie and get rheumatism. We get nothing to eat or drink. Yesterday each man drew two bottles of water and three iron rations, and these must last until we are relieved. The ceaseless roar of the guns is driving us mad, and many of the men are knocked up."

On the other hand, our men were full of spirit, and especially in the close fighting proved themselves worthy of the highest traditions of their warrior sires. Every hour of every day deeds of the highest courage and daring were performed. I shall tell you in Chapters XII. and XIII. something of those heroes who were awarded the Victoria Cross for their glorious bravery and self-sacrifice ; but let me remind you once again that for every one who received this coveted decoration there were hundreds who deserved it. One of the finest features of the fighting on our side was the manner in which officers sacrificed themselves for their men and the men gave their lives for their officers. They were truly brothers in arms, and, despite all differences of rank, real comrades.

* * * * * * *

It is time that we learnt what progress our French friends were making. By the second week of August they had carried all the German third-line position south of the Somme. On Saturday, 12th August, they attacked the corresponding positions north of the river, and won a great success. On a four-mile front they swept over the German trenches for an average depth of three-quarters of a mile. Look at your map, and find the village of Maurepas,* to the east of Hardecourt. The cemetery at Maurepas was seized, and the saddle of a hill just west of Cléry village was captured. Over 1,000 prisoners were taken on that day. On the 16th the French advanced both north and south of Maurepas. Then came a lull. A great combined assault had been arranged, but we were not yet in a position to play our part in it. For six weeks we had been fighting over the most difficult part of the ground between the Ancre and the Somme. In some places we had reached the watershed, but had not yet won enough of it to give us good jumping-off places for an attack on the German third positions, which lay on the reverse slope. So, five days after the French success of the 12th, we continued our slow but sure progress, and every day saw us winning a little ground here and a little ground there. By the evening of the 17th we were ready to make a big assault side by side with the French.

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* *More-pah.* See map on p. 63.

This combined attack began at five o'clock on the afternoon of Friday, 18th August, in unsettled weather. Rainbows and thunderstorms and bursts of bright sunshine succeeded each other, as British and French moved forward to the attack along the whole line, from Thiepval to the Somme. Our first success was gained against the Leipzig Redoubt, of which you have already read in these pages. You will remember that this stronghold, which was a nest of deep dug-outs and underground galleries heavily armed with machine guns, lay just south of Thiepval. As we moved forward to Contalmaison and Pozières we left this redoubt alone, knowing well that it would be cut off before long, and might then be captured without great loss. It was held by Prussians of the 24th Regiment, and they felt confident that we could not turn them out. So while their comrades on the ridge were being pushed back foot by foot, and were crouching in hastily-made trenches under a heavy shell-fire, they lay snug in their deep burrows, sleeping peacefully in their bunks at night and playing cards by day. We were now about to put an end to their peaceful existence.

On Friday afternoon our guns were turned on the redoubt. There was a short, sharp bombardment, and the moment it ceased two British battalions dashed towards it. Some of the Prussians fought stubbornly, but six officers and 170 men held up their hands in a body. In all we trapped 2,000 Germans. It was impossible for the enemy to make a counter-attack. Every path by which they could advance was covered by our machine guns, and as soon as they appeared in the open they were shattered by the artillery.

Elsewhere along the front the fighting was fierce and hard.

In the centre we pushed up close to Martinpuich, the village on the farther slope which had been hidden from our view until we were on the crest. From High Wood, which you will remember our patrols entered on 14th July, we struck southward for some distance. After a furious hand-to-hand struggle, which lasted several hours, we won the stone quarry on the edge of Guillemont. Meanwhile the French had carried the greater part of Maurepas, and had won what is known as Calvary Hill to the south-east of the village. The capture of this hill was perhaps the finest feat of the day. It was held by the Prussian Guards, who had done no serious fighting for several months. Even these doughty warriors, fresh and full of vigour as they were, could not stand against the fiery charge of the French *poilus*.*

At last we had made good our footing on the watershed. We held all the high ground north of Pozières, and had a clear view of the country towards Bapaume. Our lines lay 300 yards beyond the Windmill. From the Albert-Bapaume road to the High Wood all the summit was in our hands. We had not yet won the whole of the High Wood, nor had we captured Guillemont; but we were fast closing in upon the village from the north, the south, and the west. Our men on the ridge were now in full view of the German third line.

Not until the 24th did we attempt a further advance on a large scale. We spent the time in repelling German attempts to win back the lost ground and in creeping closer to Thiepval and Guillemont. Thiepval, you will remember, was the one important point in the German second line which we had not yet taken. By Monday, 21st August, we were on three sides of it, and only 1,000 yards away from it. Meanwhile there had been some very heavy fighting in the High Wood.

By this time the weather had become clearer, and our airmen were able to spy out the position of the enemy's guns, some of which we silenced. Fights in the air became very common, and the men in the trenches often watched exciting combats high above them. We still maintained that mastery of the air which we had won at the beginning of the long struggle, and so bold did our airmen become that they frequently attacked the enemy's trenches "on their own." One of our squadron commanders actually fought and beat off twelve of the enemy's machines. On a later page I shall tell you this hero's story more fully. An observer says that he took the day's work as calmly as if he had been shooting partridges.

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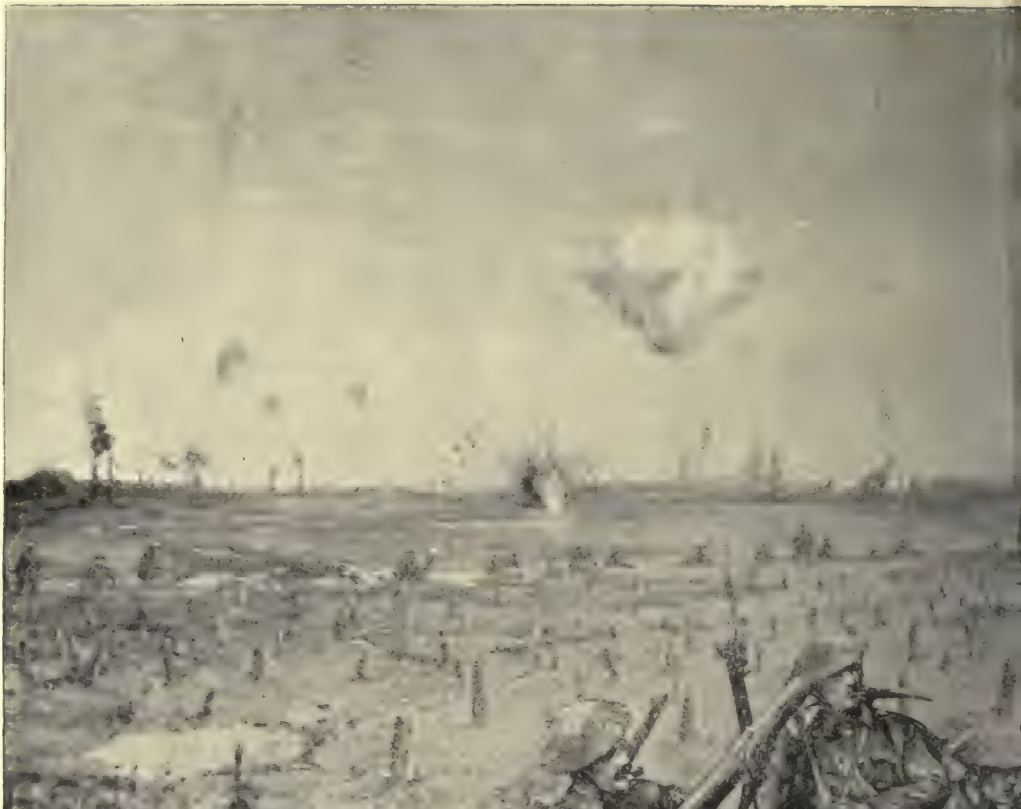
* *Pwah-loo,* French privates; so called because most of them had let their beards grow.

* * * * * * *

On 24th August another combined attack was made. We pushed nearer to Thiepval, and at one point were only five hundred yards away from that stronghold. Meanwhile the French stormed the German positions between Maurepas and Cléry, drove the enemy completely out of the former village, and carried their lines two hundred yards or more to the east of it. During the hand-to-hand fighting in the village they took 600 prisoners and eighteen machine guns. Next day, the 25th, we still further encircled Guillemont; it was now, as it were, within the jaws of a pair of pincers, and every hour the grip was growing tighter.

On the afternoon of the 24th, in clear, sunlit weather, our gunners let fly a hurricane of shells upon the maze of trenches guarding Thiepval village. A correspondent tells us that it was as if the sky suddenly darkened, and the earth exploded, and the heavens opened their gates to a hailstorm of which every stone was a thunderbolt. The trenches were utterly destroyed, and the Wiltshires and Worcestershires went forward amidst a hail of enemy shells to occupy them and turn them into defensive positions. At one place they were only five hundred yards from the core of the stronghold. By the 26th it was clear that unless the Germans could push us back Thiepval was doomed. Accordingly on that day they turned their guns upon their lost trenches, and shells rained down upon and behind the Wiltshires and Worcestershires. But our men "stuck it" splendidly. They held on, and dug for their lives, and sent a runner back with a message to the rear. By wonderful good luck he made his way uninjured through the shell bursts, and delivered his message. Then he started back again, and once more good fortune was with him.

So destructive had been the German bombardment that the trench from which he started had been wiped out, and he passed right over the site without noticing it. He wandered on over the holes and ridges seeking his comrades. At last he came to something that looked like a trench, and cautiously peered over the parapet. Imagine his surprise when he discovered that it



"Forward! Come on, boys!"

Notice that the second man on the left is carrying a Lewis gun. The picture gives you an excellent
in the background is a heap of ruins, and the woods have been reduced to a few tree trunks almost as
"Forward! Come on, boys!"

British Troops ready to advance. [*By permission of The Sphere.*

dea of how the fair fields of Picardy have been gashed by trenches and pitted by shell holes. The village bare as telegraph poles. The officer is looking at his watch, waiting for the moment to give the order, was full of Germans. It was more than full; it was crowded, and the men in it had their bayonets fixed. In a moment the runner knew what was afoot. The Prussian Guards were about to attack in great strength.

Without being noticed, he slipped away and retraced his steps as fast as he could. Fortunately, this time he found his comrades, and told them the news. In a few seconds the telephones were at work, and our gunners were dropping shells on the German trenches and on the ground over which the advance must be made. Before the Prussians could leave their trenches they were heavily assailed by shrapnel. Nevertheless they tried to charge. The first wave was caught by the guns, and was shivered to fragments. The second wave advanced a little further; but it, too, faltered and broke. Thus the prepared attack was doomed before it began. Great praise must be given to the Wiltshires and Worcestershires for the doggedness with which they withstood the enemy's fire; but I think the laurels must go to the runner who "so fortunately discovered" the Germans in the nick of time, and gave the warning that led to their destruction.

On the 31st the enemy seemed to be desperate. No doubt he knew that we were preparing to snatch Guillemont and the neighbouring village of Ginchy from him, and was trying to get his blows in first. On that day he made five violent attacks on our front between High Wood and Ginchy. They one and all failed.

* * * * * * *

On Sunday, 3rd September, the whole Allied front north of the Somme pressed forward. In the early morning the Australians attacked on the extreme left. They carried several strong positions, gained ground, captured several hundred prisoners, and still further narrowed the Thiepval salient. The British right was set the task of capturing the very strongly fortified village of Guillemont. For two years the Germans had worked upon its defences, and it was almost as hard a nut to crack as Pozières. It was, as you know, the last uncaptured point in the old German second position between Mouquet Farm and the Somme. In the afternoon the men of Ulster, Munster, Leinster, and Connaught swept like a torrent through the maze of defences, and captured the village. Not only so, but they entered Ginchy and seized the whole of it. Later in the day the Germans made very violent counter-attacks, and forced us to give up the eastern part of the village. All night their attacks continued ; but do what they might, they could not drive us out.

Further south a very good advance was made, and our men joined hands with the French, who had marched from success to success. Le Forest and Cléry fell to them, and they carried their lines to the outskirts of the small town of Combles.* Two thousand prisoners, fourteen guns, and fifty machine guns fell into their hands that day.

The battle continued throughout the week. The Allies gave the enemy no time to repair his shattered defences, and continued to push him out of his hastily made trenches all along the line. There was desperate fighting in Ginchy, but by 4th September all counter-attacks had been beaten off and further ground had been gained. That night, in drenching rain, our men pushed on, and before midday on Tuesday, 5th September, were well inside Leuze † Wood, on the eastern side of Guillemont. Before nightfall the whole of the wood was in our hands, and we were only 1,000 yards from the town of Combles. The French, you will remember, were already pushing towards it from the south. Ginchy was finally carried on 9th September by the Irish regiments which had won Guillemont, and Combles was now within our grasp.

Now let us turn for a moment to the battle-ground south of the Somme. About two in the afternoon of 5th September a new French army came into action, and began to advance from Barleux to the south of the important road and railway centre of Chaulnes.‡ At a bound they carried a front of three miles and captured 3,000 prisoners. Next day they pushed forward again, and by 9th September they were within eight hundred yards of Chaulnes.

* * * * * * *

Before I break off my account of the Big Push, let me set down the various stages of the fighting since 1st July. We set ourselves, as you know, to win the watershed which runs from behind Thiepval to Sailly on the Peronne-Bapaume road. Look again at the diagram on page 82. Starting from the original front line of the Germans, we had first to carry the terrace on which you see Fricourt, Contalmaison, and Montau-

* *Kom-b'l.* † *Lers.* ‡ *Shown.*

ban. This we accomplished between 1st and 10th July. The next stage was to fight our way up the slopes to the third terrace—that is, to capture Pozières, the two Bazentins, Longueval, and Guillemont. All these villages except Guillemont were in our hands by 26th July. Then came the struggle for the third terrace—that is, for the ridge—which occupied us until 9th September. By that date the whole of the ridge from behind Thiepval (which still held out) to the Leuze Wood was in our hands.

We had done all that we had set out to do. You know that our chief aim was not to recover so many square miles of France, or to capture towns and villages, but to press the enemy hard and take heavy toll of his men. The better to do this, we aimed at the high ground, and we had now won it. We had driven the enemy from the trenches and fortified villages upon which he had lavished his skill and energy for two years. He was no longer behind the shelter of great trench works from which, with a heavier weight of artillery than we possessed, he could direct a constant and pitiless fire upon us with little cost to himself. We were now stronger than he was in gun power, stronger in position, and stronger in the spirit and determination of our men. Tens of thousands of his troops had fallen; more than 55,000 prisoners had been taken, as well as great numbers of artillery and machine guns. He was now our inferior, and every day we were waxing in strength, while he was waning. Slowly but surely, like a strong acid dissolving a metal, we were eating away his stoutest defences. We were pressing him so hard and so unceasingly that he was showing signs of strain. Sooner or later we knew that he must retire to a shorter line of defence, and that when he strove to do so our chance to strike a decisive blow would come.

CHAPTER XI.

THE MURDER OF CAPTAIN FRYATT.

MOST boys and girls who read these pages know Tennyson's great ballad *The Revenge*. It tells us how that famous Devonshire hero Sir Richard Grenville, with one little ship fought fifty-three Spanish galleons through the whole of a summer night, and, in spite of the tremendous odds against him, worked great havoc on the foe. Even when half of his men were slain, and the *Revenge* was all but a wreck, he refused to surrender, and called upon the gunner to blow up the ship rather than let her fall into the hands of the enemy. While, however, he lay with a " grisly wound " on the deck, his men yielded.

> " And the stately Spanish men to their flagship bore him then,
> Where they laid him by the mast, old Sir Richard caught at last,
> And they praised him to his face with their courtly foreign grace."

The Spaniards were brave and honourable foes, and they could not but admire the wonderful courage of the daring old seaman. " They sank his body with honour down into the deep." When you read the ballad you greatly respect the Spaniards, and declare that they were " chivalrous foes." No one can ever describe the Germans in these terms. The German nation has never known the meaning of the word " chivalry." From the first moment of war the Germans showed that they were ready to perpetrate every kind of baseness and cruelty in order to win. They sank to their lowest depths when they murdered Nurse Cavell. The civilized world shrank with horror at the deed. But the Germans showed no shame ; on the contrary, they applauded the crime.

About the middle of the year 1916 they began to realize that they could not win the war. At best they could only hope for a kind of stalemate which would enable them to make terms with their enemies, and so escape the punishment which they so well deserved. Before long they perceived that the Allies were determined to push the war to its bitter end, and not to relax their efforts until Germany was conquered and forced to accept their terms. When they realized this, a desperate madness seemed to possess them. Thenceforth they determined to outdo their former barbarities, and to begin a new reign of "frightfulness." They seemed to cry with Satan in *Paradise Lost*,—

> "So farewell hope, and, with hope, farewell fear;
> Farewell remorse; all good to me is lost;
> Evil, be thou my good."

It was not long before they began to practise this awful creed.

* * * * * * *

Ever since the war began, the Great Eastern packet *Brussels*, under the command of Captain Charles Fryatt, had regularly crossed the North Sea between Tilbury and the Hook of Holland with cargo, passengers, and mails. On March 28, 1915, the *Brussels* was ordered to stop by the German submarine U33. Captain Fryatt was not the man to give up his ship without a big effort to save her. He manœuvred his vessel with such skill that he escaped the submarine, and, according to the Germans, tried to ram it. Instead of applauding the pluck and spirit of the captain, as any decent foe would have done, the Germans grew bitterly angry. When Captain Müller of the *Emden* was sinking our ships in Eastern waters we had no resentment against him. Indeed, he was rather admired for the manner in which he played hide-and-seek with our cruisers, and for the humanity which he showed to his captives. Captain Müller was an exceptional German. Most of his fellow-countrymen have not the slightest notion of how to "play the game."

They waited more than a year for their revenge. On the night of July 5–6, 1916, a flotilla of German torpedo boats suddenly swooped upon the *Brussels* and captured her. She was taken into Zeebrugge, her cargo was seized, and her captain was arrested. When the news reached Berlin the townsfolk showed huge delight. It was clear from the first that they

The late Captain C. Fryatt. [*Photo, The Sphere.*

Shot by the Germans, to their everlasting shame, July 28, 1916.

meant to have the captain's life. He was removed to Bruges, where he was imprisoned, and on 28th July was tried by court-martial and sentenced to death—for the crime of defending himself.

A fellow-prisoner said that Captain Fryatt was quite calm and self-possessed, and resigned to his fate. In the evening of the day on which he underwent his mock trial he was led into the prison yard and shot. He died like the brave man that he was. Even when he was dead the Germans pursued him with hate. Belgian ladies who wished to place flowers upon his grave were sternly forbidden to do so.

No fouler murder was ever committed, yet the German newspapers at once broke into a chorus of approval. They said that Captain Fryatt was a bandit, and that he deserved the severest punishment for making an illegal attack on one of their submarines. They also warned other merchant captains that if they dared to defend themselves, and were captured, they would suffer a like fate.

The Allies received the news with deep anger, and neutrals showed great indignation. On the battlefield our soldiers grimly said, " We'll make the Germans pay for this." In Parliament the Prime Minister declared that the murder was " an atrocious crime against the law of nations and the usages of war." " When the time arrives," he said, " his Majesty's Government is determined to bring to justice the criminals, whoever they may be, and whatever station they may occupy. In such cases as these the authors of the system under which such crimes are committed may well be the most guilty of all."

The murder of Captain Fryatt was not the only crime against the law of nations committed by the Germans at this time. The townsfolk—men, women, and children—of Lille and other places were seized and carried to other districts, where they were forced to work for their tyrants. You can imagine the anguish of the poor people who were thus torn from their homes and kindred. Later in the year this barbarous and cowardly practice was carried out on a larger scale, both in Northern France and in Belgium. The pitiless conquerors seemed determined to leave the hapless captives " only their eyes to weep with."

CHAPTER XII.

HEROES OF THE VICTORIA CROSS.—I.

IN Chapters XXXVIII. and XXXIX. of Volume V. I brought the record of Victoria Cross winners down to the end of June 1916. In this and in the following chapter you will read accounts of the twenty-nine gallant soldiers who received the highest award of valour during the series of struggles which gave us the high ground between the Ancre and the Somme. Unhappily, ten of them did not live to wear the coveted cross. The first hero on our list is—

LIEUTENANT ARTHUR HUGH BATTEN-POOLL, Royal Munster Fusiliers.

On page 26 of this volume I described a raid of the Royal Munsters on the enemy's trenches. Lieutenant Batten-Pooll was in command of the party which made this raid. At the moment when his men scrambled over the enemy's parapet he was severely wounded by a bomb, which broke and smashed all the fingers of his right hand. Despite the pain which he was suffering, he continued to lead his men with unflinching courage, and his voice was constantly heard cheering and directing them. Some of his comrades begged him to retire, but he refused. Half an hour later, when the victorious party was returning to its own trenches, he helped to rescue wounded men, and received two other wounds. Still he refused assistance, and struggled on unaided until he was within a hundred yards of his trench, when he fell in a faint and was carried in by members of the covering party. No wonder that his dauntless spirit inspired his men to the highest pitch of daring.

CAPTAIN JOHN LESLIE GREEN, R.A.M.C.

Over and over again in these pages you have read accounts of the glorious self-sacrifice of our medical officers. Captain

Green, when sorely wounded, saw a brother officer who had fallen across the enemy's wire and was bleeding his life away. Though in agonies himself, he crawled up to the officer and managed to drag him into a shell-hole. Then, while bombs and rifle grenades were bursting around him, he dressed the stricken man's wounds. Seizing a favourable opportunity, he strove to bring his charge into safe cover, and had almost done so, when a shot struck him, and he fell to rise no more.*

"Life's race well run,
Life's work well done,
Life's victory won,
Now cometh rest."

LIEUTENANT RICHARD BASIL BRANDRAM JONES, Loyal North Lancashire Regiment.

Lieutenant Jones was holding with his platoon a crater which had recently been captured from the enemy. About 7.30 in the evening the Germans exploded a mine some forty yards on his right, and at the same time put a curtain fire behind our trenches to prevent reinforcements from coming up. Then they attacked the little party with overwhelming numbers. Lieutenant Jones rallied his men, steadied them by his example, and shot down fifteen of the advancing enemy, calling out his score as he picked them off, one by one, to encourage his men. When all his cartridges were gone he seized a bomb, but, just as he was about to throw it, was shot through the head. His splendid courage so animated his men that they determined to fight to the last gasp. When their cartridges and bombs were exhausted, they flung stones and ammunition boxes at the enemy, and thus kept up a resistance until only nine of them were left. Finally they were compelled to retire.

MAJOR STEWART WALTER LOUDOUN-SHAND, Yorkshire Regiment.

When the Boer War broke out Major Shand was not eighteen years of age; nevertheless he felt that duty called, and he endeavoured to enlist in the London Scottish. He was refused because of his age, but managed to join the Pembrokeshire Yeomanry, and in their ranks fought right through the war.

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* About this time it was announced that the King would present to their parents or next of kin the Victoria Crosses won by those who had fallen on the field of honour.

Her Son's V.C. The King presenting the Victoria Cross to the Mother of a fallen Hero.

(*From the drawing by S. Begg. By permission of The Illustrated London News.*)

He then settled down to banking business in Port Elizabeth, and afterwards in Colombo, where he occupied his leisure in all kinds of sports. When the great rally of the Empire began, he and his four brothers joined up. One of them was the Rugby international, Captain E. G. Loudoun-Shand, King's Royal Rifles. During the Great Push Major Shand's company received the order, "Over the parapets!" but so fierce was the machine-gun fire of the enemy that the men dared not obey. Immediately the major leaped on to the parapet in full view of the Germans, helped his men up, and cheered and encouraged them in every way until he fell with a mortal wound. With his last breath he urged on his men to the attack.

CAPTAIN (TEMP. LIEUT.-COLONEL) ADRIAN CARTON DE WIART, D.S.O., Dragoon Guards.

Colonel Carton de Wiart was Belgian born, and was related to the Belgian Minister of Justice and the Secretary to the King of the Belgians. He was a law student at Balliol College, Oxford, when the South African War began. At once he threw up his studies and enlisted as a trooper in the Middlesex Yeomanry. He served throughout the campaign, in which he was twice wounded, and afterwards received a commission in the Dragoon Guards. During the years of peace he won distinction as a polo player and steeplechase rider. During the campaign in Somaliland (1914) he was again wounded, and lost an eye. In Flanders, during the early months of the Great War, he was badly hit, and lost his right hand. His services were rewarded by the D.S.O., and the Order of Leopold from the King of the Belgians.

In the course of the Great Push he showed striking bravery, coolness, and determination during some of the severest of the struggles. Owing in great measure to his dauntless courage and his inspiring example, what looked like a serious reverse was turned into victory. He exhibited the greatest energy and courage in pressing the attack home, and when three colonels had been put out of action, took over their commands and maintained the ground that had been won. Many times he exposed himself, and with unflinching courage passed through a curtain fire in which it seemed impossible that a man could live. Finally, he was wounded in the head, but made a good recovery. Never was Victoria Cross more worthily won than by this much-wounded but still undaunted Belgian-Briton.

LIEUTENANT GEOFFREY ST. GEORGE SHILLINGWORTH CATHER, Royal Irish Fusiliers.

Lieutenant Cather was another of the noble band who gave their lives in the effort to save others. From seven in the evening until midnight he searched No Man's Land for wounded men. He brought in three, and early next morning, in full sight of the enemy, and under direct machine-gun fire and bursting shells, he set out again on his errand of mercy. This time he rescued a fourth wounded man, gave water to others, and arranged for their rescue later on. Finally, at 10.30, he took water to a sufferer out in the open, and was trying to succour another, when he was hit and fell dead.

SECOND-LIEUTENANT ARTHUR SEAFORTH BLACKBURN, Australian Infantry.

On page 94 I told you how the Australians gained a footing in Pozières, and after a three days' fight the entire village was captured. Some of the most heroic deeds of the war were done by the Australians during those three days of fierce struggle. Turn back to page 277, Volume IV., and read again the story of how they seized the Lone Pine position in Gallipoli. On the outskirts of Pozières and in the ruined houses of the village they displayed similar heroism. Five of them won the Victoria Cross, and scores of others deserved it. Second-Lieutenant Blackburn, at the head of fifty men, was ordered to drive the enemy from a strong trench. Three separate times he led his bombers against it, and three times they were driven back, and many of his men lay dead or wounded on the ground. Again, for the fourth time, he pushed forward, and this time gained a footing in the trench. Desperate fighting followed, and 250 yards of the position were won. As soon as it was secured, he and a sergeant crawled across the No Man's Land to spy out the next enemy trench. When they had satisfied themselves as to its position they returned. Then the lieutenant led a party forward once more, and another 100 yards of trench were seized. This enabled him to link up with the battalion on his right.

PRIVATE THOMAS COOKE, Australian Infantry.

Another Australian who showed superb courage during the struggle for Pozières was Private Thomas Cooke. He and his team were in charge of a Lewis gun, and were ordered to proceed to a dangerous part of the line. They reached the position and did fine work, but were subjected to a very heavy fire. All his comrades were struck down, and he alone was left to work the gun. Nevertheless he stuck to his post, and for a considerable time the sound of his firing was heard. Then it suddenly ceased. Later on he was discovered lying dead beside his gun—faithful to the end.

PRIVATE WILLIAM JACKSON, Australian Infantry.

When Private Jackson and his comrades were returning after a successful raid the German guns were turned on them, and several of the party were wounded. Private Jackson had his hands full at the moment, as he was bringing in a prisoner. As soon, however, as he had handed over his captive, he crept back into the open ground, on which a torrent of shells was falling, and assisted in bringing in a disabled comrade. Not content with this, he joined a sergeant, and together they went into the open once more. He and the sergeant were helping a wounded man in when a shell burst close to them. The sergeant lay unconscious, and Jackson's arm was blown off. Nevertheless he did not cease his merciful labours. He returned to the trench, and with the help of comrades went out again to look for the two wounded men. You will search far in the annals of heroism before you find such a record of determination and self-sacrifice as this.

PRIVATE MARTIN O'MEARA, Australian Infantry.

During the days of heavy fighting in and around Pozières, Private O'Meara repeatedly went out into the open under intense artillery and machine-gun fire, and brought in wounded officers and men. When it became necessary to send ammunition forward through the rain of bursting shells, he volunteered for the task, and carried it through successfully. Throughout the fighting he showed an utter contempt for danger, and was the means of saving many lives.

PRIVATE JOHN LEAKE, Australian Infantry.

During one assault enemy bombers, lying in a bombing pit close to our lines, were doing great execution, and our men could make no effective reply. Private Leake saw that heroic measures were necessary. He leaped out of his trench, ran forward under heavy machine-gun fire at close range, and threw three bombs into the pit. Then he jumped in and bayoneted the three bombers who were unwounded. Later, when the enemy in overwhelming numbers was driving his party out of their trench, he was the last to withdraw at every stage, and never ceased hurling bombs at the advancing foe. His resistance kept the enemy at bay until reinforcements arrived, and the lost trench was recaptured.

SECOND-LIEUTENANT L. DONALD SIMPSON BELL, Yorkshire Regiment.

Prior to the war, Second-Lieutenant Bell was a school teacher at Harrogate. He was a footballer and a born leader of men, and he exercised a great and good influence on his pupils and the members of the Young Men's Christian Association, in which he was greatly interested. As one of our companies was pushing forward to the attack, an enemy machine gun opened fire on the flank, and many men fell. Without waiting for orders Lieutenant Bell, followed by a corporal and a private, crept up a communication trench towards the machine gun. Arrived at the nearest point, the lieutenant rushed across the open under a heavy fire, shot down the gunner with his revolver, and destroyed the gun and the rest of the team with bombs. This very brave deed saved many lives, and ensured the success of the attack. Five days later the gallant soldier, while attempting to perform a similar feat, was killed. His colonel declared that he was one of the finest officers he had ever seen.

COMPANY SERGEANT-MAJOR NELSON VICTOR CARTER, Royal Sussex Regiment.

During an attack Sergeant-Major Carter was in command of the fourth wave of the assault. Under intense shell and machine-gun fire, he and a few of his men pushed right into the enemy's second line, and worked great havoc with bombs. While retiring under pressure of overwhelming odds, he shot a machine gunner with his revolver, and captured the weapon. Then he busied himself in carrying wounded men into safety, and while doing so was mortally wounded, and died in a few minutes. "His conduct throughout the day," says the official record, "was magnificent."

CORPORAL GEORGE SANDERS, West Yorks Regiment.

On page 85 I described the splendid stand made by a hundred West Kents who had been cut off in the Trônes Wood. You are now to hear of a similar exploit performed by thirty men of the West Yorks Regiment, under the command of Corporal George Sanders. When the corporal discovered that he and his little party were isolated, he urged his men to hold out to the last, and right nobly they answered his call. At once they set to work strengthening their position. A bombing party was detailed, and all through the night the gallant thirty worked and watched. Early next morning the Germans bore down upon them, but were driven off, and some of our men who had fallen into their hands were rescued. Later on two bombing attacks were made by the Germans, but both failed. Then came another long night of anxiety and suspense. The food had all gone, and the water had been given to the wounded. Nevertheless, the heroic little band had no thought of surrender. Next day, after thirty-six hours of fighting and suffering, relief arrived. Not until the newcomers were firmly established did the gallant corporal leave the position which he had so staunchly held. By this time his thirty men had dwindled to nineteen.

PRIVATE WILLIAM FREDERICK FAULDS, South African Infantry.

The first South African to win the Victoria Cross in this war now appears on the scene. The South Africans, you will remember, fought side by side with the Scots in the desperate encounters which won for us Longueval and Delville Wood. At a certain point in the line a bombing party, led by Lieutenant Craig, attempted to rush across forty yards of ground which lay between the British and the enemy trenches. The Germans shot down most of them, including Lieutenant Craig, who lay midway between the two lines of trench. Private Faulds saw him, and determined to rescue him. In full daylight, a clear mark for the enemy, he and two other men climbed over the parapet, ran out into the open, picked up the officer, and carried him back, one of the three being severely wounded on the return journey. Two days later Private Faulds displayed the same self-sacrificing heroism. At this time the enemy's artillery fire was so intense that the stretcher-bearers thought certain death would be the lot of any one who attempted to bring in the wounded. Nevertheless, without a thought for himself, Private Faulds went out into the open, picked up a stricken man, and carried him for nearly half a mile to a dressing-station. He then returned to his platoon, and " carried on "

"Up with you, Fritz!" Hauling a Wounded Prisoner out of the Trench.

(*By permission of The Sphere.*)

An incident during a raid on the enemy's trenches. The British have surprised and carried a German trench, and are taking back prisoners. One of them who is wounded is being helped over the parapet. Meanwhile an officer has switched on his electric torch, and has discovered a German hiding in the darkness at the bottom of the trench.

without a notion that he had performed deeds of outstanding gallantry.

PRIVATE JAMES HUTCHINSON, Lancashire Fusiliers.

Before the war this hero was a spinner in a cotton mill at Bury. When home from the front on leave he visited his schoolmaster, and said, " I often think of the hidings I have had from you. It was all my fault. I cannot see that it has done me any harm ; but if I could not get on at school, I am getting on very well among the Germans." So he was ; but his crowning feat had yet to come. When he was returning to the front a friend bade him farewell with the remark, " Well, tha'll look well if tha' comes back with the V.C." He did. During an attack on an enemy's position Private Hutchinson was the leading man, and right well did he lead. He shot two sentries, and unaided cleared two of the traverses. After our object had been gained, and the attacking party was ordered to retire, he undertook the task of covering his comrades as they made their way back to their own trenches. All the time he was under a fierce fire from machine guns and rifles at close quarters, but by a miracle he escaped, and, thanks to his pluck and determination, the wounded were removed into safety.

PRIVATE WILLIAM FREDERICK M'FADZEAN, Royal Irish Rifles.

On page 288 of Vol. IV. I told you how nobly Lieutenant Smith of the East Lancashires flung himself on bursting bombs in Gallipoli, and by so doing saved others at the cost of his own life. You are now to hear of a similar sacrifice which was made during the Great Push. Companies of the Royal Irish Rifles were crowded in a trench awaiting orders to begin an attack, when a box of bombs which had been opened for distribution slipped down, and two of the safety pins fell out. Private M'Fadzean instantly realized the danger, and with heroic courage threw himself on the bombs. They exploded and blew him to pieces, but only one other man was injured. " He well knew his danger, being himself a bomber, but without a moment's hesitation gave his life for his comrades." In civil life he was engaged in the linen handkerchief firm of Spencer, Bryson, and Company, Aberdeen. His portrait, with the story of his superb self-sacrifice, now hangs in every department of the factory.

PRIVATE JAMES MILLER, Royal Lancashire Rifles.

While his battalion was busily engaged in making a captured trench capable of defence, he was ordered to take an important message to the rear, and bring back a reply at all costs. No sooner had he left the trench than he was shot in the back, the bullet coming out in front. Ninety-nine men out of a hundred thus wounded would have returned for medical assistance. Not so James Miller. Compressing the gaping wound with his hand, he went on, delivered his message, and staggered back with the reply. Hardly were the words out of his mouth when he fell at the feet of his officer, dead. By this supreme act a humble Lancashire millworker had emulated the highest deeds of Spartan devotion.

PRIVATE ROBERT QUIGG, Royal Irish Rifles.

Along with his platoon, Private Quigg advanced to the assault three times in one day. Early next morning he heard a rumour that his officer was wounded and lying out in the open. Seven separate times did this heroic man go out of his trench to look for his missing officer. Bullets whistled past him, and shells burst around him; but, utterly careless of his own safety, he went to and fro in No Man's Land for seven hours, and succeeded in bringing seven men out of the very jaws of death. Though the last man whom he rescued lay within a few yards of the enemy's wire, Private Quigg managed to get a waterproof sheet under him, and to drag him into safety. He only ceased his splendid work when he was too exhausted to stand.

DRUMMER WALTER RITCHIE, Seaforth Highlanders.

Drummer Ritchie was a Glasgow boy who joined the Seaforth Highlanders in 1908, when he was sixteen years of age. His parents wished to buy him out, but the lad would not hear of it. " I want to be a soldier," he said, and that was the end of the discussion. He went out with his regiment at the beginning of the war, fought at Mons, trudged wearily southward during the retreat, and advanced triumphantly with his comrades to the Aisne. In later fighting he was twice gassed and twice wounded, though not severely. On 3rd September he wrote a letter home, and enclosed in it the French Military Cross with which he had been decorated by General Hunter Weston. Not a word did he vouchsafe as to the circumstances under which he had won it. On 9th September his name appeared in the newspapers as the winner of a Victoria Cross. He had never mentioned the matter to his parents. " He's just like that," said his mother, when she was told the news.

" If he was sitting on that chair now, you would not get a word out of him about it."

The official record tells us that at a time when many units having lost their leaders were wavering and beginning to retire, Drummer Ritchie, without orders, suddenly sprang upon the parapet of an enemy trench, and, while machine guns were rattling and bombs were bursting, repeatedly sounded the " Charge " on a bugle. At the sound of the stirring trumpet call our men rallied, and the situation was saved. Not only did Drummer Ritchie show splendid courage and resource at the critical moment, but many times throughout the day he carried messages over fire-swept ground.

It is said that the bugle with which our hero rallied and inspired his comrades was captured from the Germans. In a former scrap, so the story goes, he dropped his drum and snatched up a rifle, with the result that the drum was lost, and " is likely in Germany now." For this he was court-martialled, but no doubt the court-martial was merely a formal affair. It was rifles rather than drums that were needed that day.

PRIVATE WILLIAM SHORT, Yorkshire Regiment.

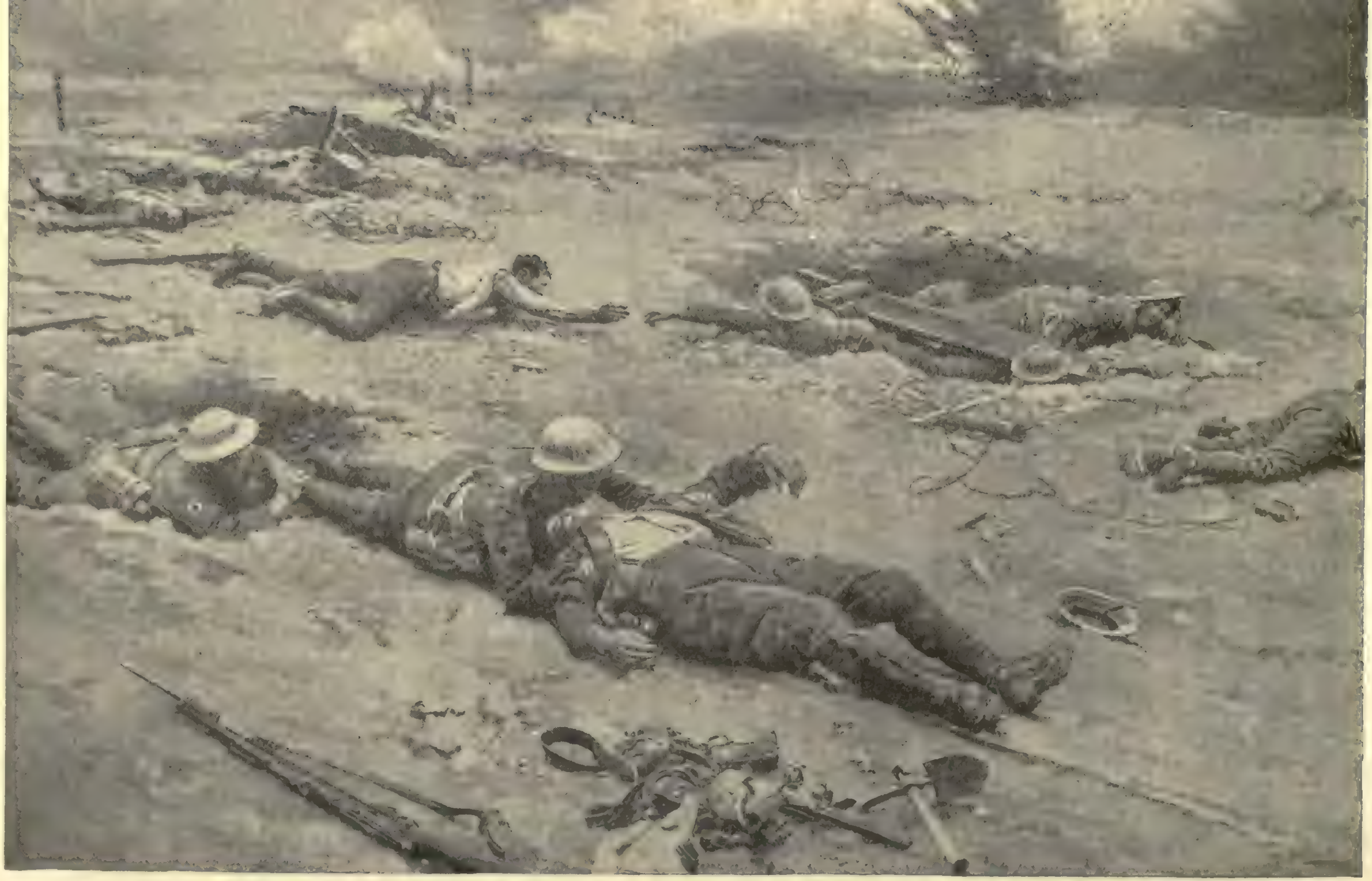
For eleven months Private Short had set a fine example to his fellows. Whenever a dangerous enterprise was on foot he was the first to volunteer. During the last attack in which he took part he bombed the enemy with great gallantry, even when severely wounded in the foot. He was urged to retire; but he refused to do so, and continued to throw bombs until his leg was shattered by a shell. He was carried back to the trench; but in the midst of his agony his mind was bent on duty. He could no longer fight, but almost to the last moment of his life he was busy adjusting detonators and straightening the pins of bombs in order to help his comrades.

PRIVATE THOMAS GEORGE TURRALL, Worcestershire Regiment.

It was on 24th August 1916 that the Worcestershires, along with the Wiltshires, won the warm praise of Sir Douglas Haig for their steadiness and determined gallantry in the trenches south of Thiepval. In one of the bombing attacks which were then made our men pushed far into the maze of trenches, but were forced to retire, leaving behind them Lieutenant Jennings, badly wounded. Private Turrall refused to retreat with his comrades, and remained with the wounded officer. For three hours he stood his ground in spite of bullets and bombs, and at last, when counter-attacks had relieved the position, was able to carry the wounded officer into safety. Unhappily, Lieutenant Jennings died before he could be operated upon. "Will you let me know when your brave son is in England again ?" wrote the officer's mother to Private Turrall's mother. "I will go anywhere to see him, and give him some special thing in memory of Lieutenant Jennings. Your son must be a hero, and so strong, for my son was over six feet."

PRIVATE THEODORE WILLIAM HENRY VEALE, Devonshire Regiment.

I have already said that one of the most inspiring features of the Great Push was the manner in which officers sacrificed themselves for their men, and men gave their lives for their officers. You have already read of several cases in which men saved their officers. Here is another instance. The hero of this exploit was Private Veale, the first man to volunteer for service at a recruiting meeting held in his native town of Dartmouth in August 1914. He was a noted runner, and from boyhood was remarkable for his fearlessness. While in the trenches he heard a cry for help from No Man's Land. A few minutes previously a man had been seen waving his hand, and it was supposed that a German wished to surrender. The cry, however, assured Private Veale that the movement had been made by one of our wounded. At once he crept out of the trench and made his way across the open under heavy fire. Imagine his surprise when he discovered a wounded officer half hidden in the growing corn within fifty yards of the enemy's line. "I crawled back again," he said, "and got two more men and a corporal to come out with a waterproof sheet, which we put under him. We got him along about eighty yards, but when going over a bit of a bridge the Germans shot the corporal through the head. I made the officer comfortable in a shell-hole, and went back for a team, and also for water. When evening came I led the way for our chaplain (Captain Duff) and Sergeant Smith. We reached the wounded officer just before dark, and as we were about to carry him in we were 'spotted' by the Germans, who crept up towards us. Without thinking, I stood up and ran about one hundred and fifty yards to the trenches for my Lewis gun. I raced out again, and covered the party while they got in with him." The official



A Party of R.A.M.C. Men bringing in the Wounded from No Man's Land after an Action.

(*From the drawing by F. Matania. By permission of The Sphere.*)

The work of the R.A.M.C. between the lines is extremely dangerous, and calls for great personal bravery. After an attack the men of the R.A.M.C. crawl out into the broken, shell-pitted ground to rescue the wounded. They take advantage of every hole and hollow, for no man can stand up and live long in No Man's Land during the day. In some cases the wounded can only be brought in at night.

record thus concludes: "The courage and determination which he displayed were of the highest order."

CAPTAIN (TEMP. MAJOR) LIONEL WILMOT BRABAZON REES, Royal Artillery and Royal Flying Corps.

You already know that our aviators, by winning the command of the air, played a large part in the victories which I have described at length in former chapters. No flying man did more heroic deeds than Major Rees, whom I briefly referred to, though not by name, on page 103. The story of the fight that won him the Victoria Cross makes thrilling reading. As a flight-commander he had already been awarded the Military Cross for bringing down three German machines. During the Great Push he was flying as a squadron commander over Festubert when he sighted two groups of aeroplanes, ten in all. He thought that they were our own machines returning from a raid, and sailed out to escort them home. As, however, he drew near to them he discovered that they were enemy machines. One of them attacked him; but in a few minutes Major Rees managed to hit it in a vital place. It turned a somersault, and fell to the earth in flames. Five others then engaged him at long range; but by superb manœuvring, in the midst of a shower of bullets, he dispersed them, and while doing so seriously damaged two of them. Then noticing a couple of enemy machines making off westward, he gave chase to them, and caught one of them up. In the duel that followed he was wounded in the thigh, and for a short time lost control of his machine. He soon recovered himself, righted the machine, closed in to within a few yards of his enemy, and continued firing his machine gun until all his ammunition was exhausted. Then, and only then, did he break off the fight and make tracks for home and safety. A spectator likened Major Rees on the day of his great fight to Horatius, whose magnificent stand against a huge host is familiar to you all through the verses of Lord Macaulay:—

"And still his name sounds stirring
Unto the men of Rome,
As the trumpet-blast that cries to them
To charge the Volscians* home;

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* The Volscians were an ancient Italian people, who during the 5th and 4th centuries B.C. were constantly at war with Rome. By 304 B.C. they had become Roman citizens.

And wives still pray to Juno
  For boys with hearts as bold
As his who kept the bridge so well
  In the brave days of old."

PRIVATE GEORGE WILLIAM CHAFER, East Yorkshire Regiment.

During a very heavy bombardment of our trenches, followed by an advance of the enemy, Private Chafer lay in his trench with his leg shattered by a shell. While in a half-dazed condition owing to the pain, he saw a comrade who was carrying a written message to the company commander knocked down and half buried by a bursting shell. As the man lay on the ground he cried, " Somebody take this message." Knowing how important the message was, our hero determined to try to deliver it. Although one leg was useless, he took the message and crawled along the parapet in the midst of a fierce machine-gun and shell fire. " To be frank," he said, when he told his story, " I have only a hazy recollection of my progress. My brain was clear one minute and clouded the next, and how I came through without further injury is a miracle." He reached the officer at last, delivered his message, and then fell unconscious. He afterwards recovered, but lost his right leg. I think you will agree that by his remarkable presence of mind and his splendid devotion to duty at a critical time, he fully deserved the highest honour that could be bestowed upon him.

CHAPTER XIII.

HEROES OF THE VICTORIA CROSS.—II.

ACTING-SERGEANT JOHN ERSKINE, Scottish Rifles (T.F.).

The enemy had just exploded a mine in front of our trenches, and our men had rushed forward and were busily engaged in fortifying the near lip, when Sergeant Erskine observed a sergeant and a private lying wounded in the open. The ground was swept by the enemy's fire, and it seemed certain death to venture out ; nevertheless Sergeant Erskine, utterly regardless of the danger, ran forward and rescued the wounded men. Later in the day he saw Lieutenant Stevenson, whom he thought to be dead, show signs of life. Again he ran out, bandaged the wounded man's head, and remained with him, under a heavy fire, until a shallow trench was dug out to them. He then helped to bring in the officer, and while doing so shielded him with his own body. A comrade who witnessed the deed wrote to Sergeant Erskine's mother as follows : " Every man in the sapping platoon of the 5th Scottish Rifles acted the hero on that terrible morning, and many men, I am sure, would have been recommended for distinction had it not been for the fact that the heroism of your son John so outshone everything else."

Before the war Sergeant Erskine was a draper. Sir Robert Maule of Edinburgh, with whose firm he had served his apprenticeship, congratulated the hero's mother in these words : " There is no draper in the kingdom who does not to-day hold his head the higher because one of his calling has risen to supreme heights of valour on the battlefield. The public in the past has not looked for outstanding courage in those who serve behind the counter. It has, perhaps, even regarded ours as an effeminate calling. Thanks to John's remarkable display of courage, it will never do so again. He has shown that a man may in times of peace sell soft goods, and yet, in defence of all that he holds dear, prove himself a paladin. . . . He freely risked his life to save others, and by so doing came as near the divine as is possible for human nature."

SAPPER WILLIAM HACKETT, Royal Engineers.

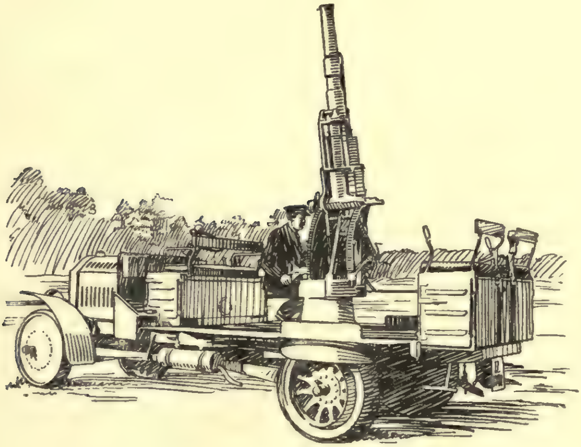
Sapper Hackett was working in a gallery underground when an enemy mine was exploded, and he and four others were entombed. After twenty-four hours' work his comrades managed to make a small hole through the fallen earth and broken timbers, and communicate with them. Sergeant Hackett helped three of his companions through the hole; but the remaining man was wounded, and could not easily be moved. When the gallant sergeant was urged to save himself, he said, "I am a tunneller. I must look after the others first." Meanwhile the earth was sliding down, and the hole was being rapidly filled up. The sergeant knew well that his chance of escape was slipping away every moment, but he would not leave his wounded comrade. At last, with a crash, the whole gallery collapsed, and the two men were once more in a living tomb. For four days a rescue party worked desperately in the hope of reaching them. They failed, and the gallant sergeant and his wounded companion now sleep their last sleep deep in the soil of Picardy. So perished one of the noblest of heroes. The Bishop of Sheffield, in comforting the sergeant's widow, said, "I recollect no finer deed in the war, and I am proud to be the bishop of a diocese producing such splendid men."

PRIVATE ARTHUR HERBERT PROCTER, 5th King's Liverpool Rifles (T.F.).

Private Procter's honour was awarded for the display of that courage which risks all to save the lives of others. Looking out from his parapet, he saw two stricken men in the open showing signs of life. They were about seventy-five yards in front of his trench, and were in full view of the enemy. He felt a great sorrow for the poor fellows, and determined to go out to their rescue. Through a heavy fire he crawled forward, reached the two men, drew them under the cover of a small bank, and dressed their wounds. Leaving them some of his own clothing for warmth, he promised to arrange for their rescue at dusk, and then started on the perilous return journey. Though again the mark for many bullets, he reached his trench in safety, and at dusk both men were brought in alive. Before the war Private Procter was employed as a clerk at the Liverpool Produce Exchange. When the news arrived that he had won the Victoria Cross, the members sent him a telegram of congratulation; and when he returned home on leave, presented him with a gold watch and more than £200. He was described as a slightly-built young man of great modesty, who was specially proud of the fact that the King, when handing him his decoration, had said, " Very good indeed."

Private George Stringer, Manchester Regiment.

An enemy position having been captured, Private Stringer was posted on the extreme right of his battalion to guard against any hostile attack. After a time the enemy came on in great strength, with the object of recapturing the lost position, and the battalion was forced to retire. Private Stringer, though entirely alone, held his ground, and kept the enemy at bay until he had no more bombs left. His very gallant stand saved the flank of his battalion, and enabled it to retire in good order.



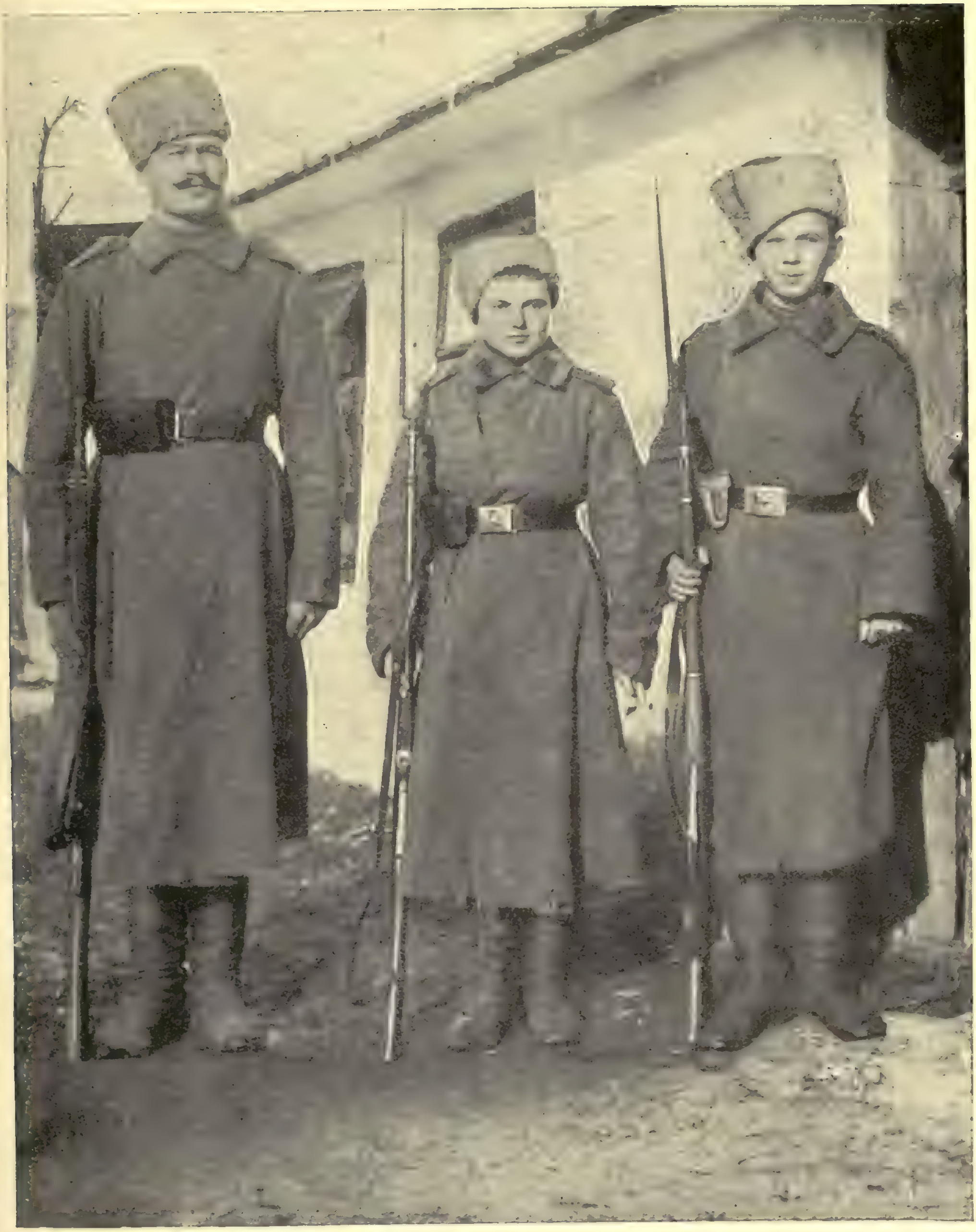
CHAPTER XIV.

THE GREAT RUSSIAN ADVANCE.

THE July, August, and September of the year 1916 were months of victory for the Allies, both in East and West. In former chapters of this volume I have told you how we gained the upper hand of the Germans on the Western front. We must now see what progress the Russian campaign was making. In Chapter XLIV. of our fifth volume I brought the story down to the end of June. That month, you will remember, was crowned with signal successes ; but these successes were incomplete. Brussilov had pushed out two great wedges into the enemy's lines—the one in Volhynia, the other in Bukovina—and had captured 217,000 prisoners. Nevertheless, the campaign was only in its first stage.

Look at the map on page 135, and notice the two bulges which had been made in the enemy's line—the one in front of Lutsk, the other in the southern part of the line. You will see at a glance that what Brussilov had now to do was to straighten his front. He had to carry his line westward until it ran north and south from the Pripet to the northern slopes of the Carpathians. To the north of the Lutsk salient he had to carry the line of the Stokhod, and to the south of it he had to push west to Brody and Stanislau.

During the last ten days of June the Germans hurried up reinforcements to the line Kovel-Lemberg, and ordered General Linsingen to push the Russians back across the Styr. At first Linsingen had some success, and he forced the Russians to give up their bridgehead on the upper Stokhod. But he could do no more. In spite of very fierce fighting, neither side could gain any real advantage. Then it was that Brussilov brought a fresh army into the field, and began a big attempt to advance



A Russian Girl Soldier and her Comrades.

(*Photo, The Sphere.*)

Mademoiselle Tania, who is shown in the centre of the above picture, was a girl soldier of sixteen years of age who was recommended for the cross and medal of St. George. On the left is the tallest soldier of her company, and on the right a boy volunteer of fifteen.

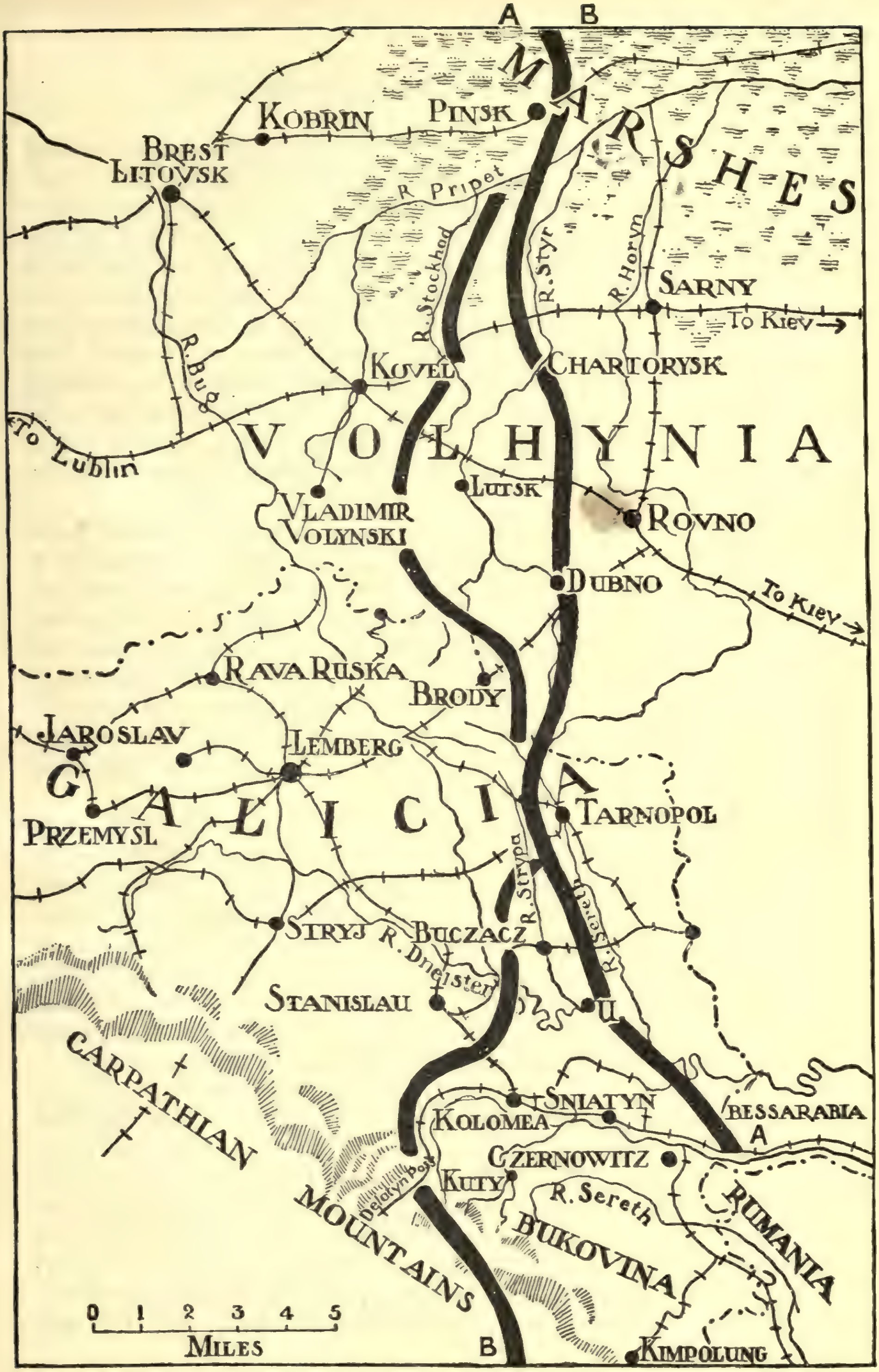
across the Lower Stokhod and capture Kovel from the north. This army was under the command of General Lesh, who had won his spurs in the Russo-Japanese War.

Between the southern end of the marshes and the town of Kolki stretches a wide, sandy plain which seems to be a part of the Sahara transferred to Russia. It is covered with sandy dunes, on which grow coarse grass and poppies. It was across this desert region that Lesh began to move at dawn on 4th July. You will see from the map that his flanks were protected by the marshes and lagoons on the north. He was about to carry the thirty miles of sandy plain which lay between him and the sluggish Stokhod.

The battle began with a fierce bombardment along fifty miles of front. Never before had the Russians been able to hurl such a torrent of shell upon their enemies. Soon the German parapets were broken down, and the air was thick with flying sand. Then two infantry attacks were launched, the one to the south and the other to the north of the railway. Both were successful. A good advance was made north of the railway, and south of it the outskirts of Kolki were reached.

Next day the army attacking Kolki found itself face to face with a very strong position defended by land mines and three lines of barbed wire. The Germans had also installed fire-spraying devices, and these were meant for use against the Russian infantry as they broke through the barbed wire. Huge vats of liquid for the flame-projectors were stored deep under ground. After very heavy fighting, during which the Bavarians made a stubborn defence, the Russians broke through the German lines, and bridged the river Styr. Amongst the dead were discovered the bodies of many badly-burned Germans. It is supposed that the Russian shells flung the burning liquid over those who were striving to spray it on their enemies. By 7th July Cossacks were holding a railway station half-way between the Styr and the Stokhod, and the two attacking forces had joined hands. Two days later the upper Stokhod was crossed at the place where you notice that the river makes a sharp bend to the east. The Russians were now along the line of the Stokhod river all the way from the Pripet to the Rovno-Kovel railway.

The advance of the Russians was very rapid. They pressed on over sandy dunes and through shattered pine woods as if



Map to illustrate the Russian Offensive between the Marshes of the Pripet and the Rumanian Border.

The broad black line AA shows the Russian front on June 2, 1916. The broad black line BB shows the Russian front on July 18, 1916.

Kovel was to be their next stop. By this time the Austrians and Germans were in disorderly flight. As they hurried westward they fired the villages, and Lesh advanced through pillars of cloud by day and pillars of fire by night. In front of his infantry rode the gray Cossacks, driving the enemy remorselessly before them. In four days an advance of twenty-five miles was made on a forty-mile front. Prisoners were captured by the thousand. In the course of this great drive more than 650 officers, 22,000 men, 50 guns, and huge stores of war booty fell into the hands of the Russians. Lesh had played his part to perfection ; the line of the Stokhod had been reached ; and Kovel, the great railway centre of the region, was only thirty miles away.

Should Kovel fall, Prince Leopold of Bavaria would have to fall back from Pinsk to the line of the Bug, a distance of a hundred miles or more. A little study of the railways marked on the map will show you why. Most of the supplies for the army operating in the marshes had to travel from Lemberg to Kovel, then westward to Cholm, northward to Brest-Litovski, and finally eastward to Pinsk. The Germans would lose this route if Kovel fell, and would have to open up a fresh line of communications with Hungary. Now you see how important it was that Kovel should be held.

It was clear that the capture of Kovel would be no easy task. The river was bordered on either side with marshy, reed-grown tracts, and on the farther side the ground rose slightly, so that the enemy had the better observation posts. During the previous autumn the Germans had dug deep trenches on the line of the river, and had made them very strong indeed. Many new batteries had been brought up, and it was said that one hundred heavy guns and the same number of lighter pieces were in position. The Russians were already across the river in some places, but they had not made good their footing.

To prepare the way for the crossing of the rivers, selected men, all first-rate swimmers, plunged into the water, carrying arms and ammunition, either tied in a bundle on their heads or dragged after them on a little raft. Their horses swam beside them. When they reached the opposite bank they blew up bridges and railway lines, and created bridgeheads, so as to enable the engineers to throw pontoons across the stream.

It was, however, found impossible to rush the German positions, and about the middle of July Russians and Germans in this part of the line settled down to the dull business of trench warfare. Not until 28th July were they able to make another forward movement. On that day they broke through the enemy lines, and crossed the river at many points. The Germans were forced to fall back to prepared positions in the rear; but they were now able to make a strong resistance. By 2nd August, however, the Russians had won the line of the Stokhod on a forty-mile front, and between them and Kovel lay only twenty-five miles of easy country.

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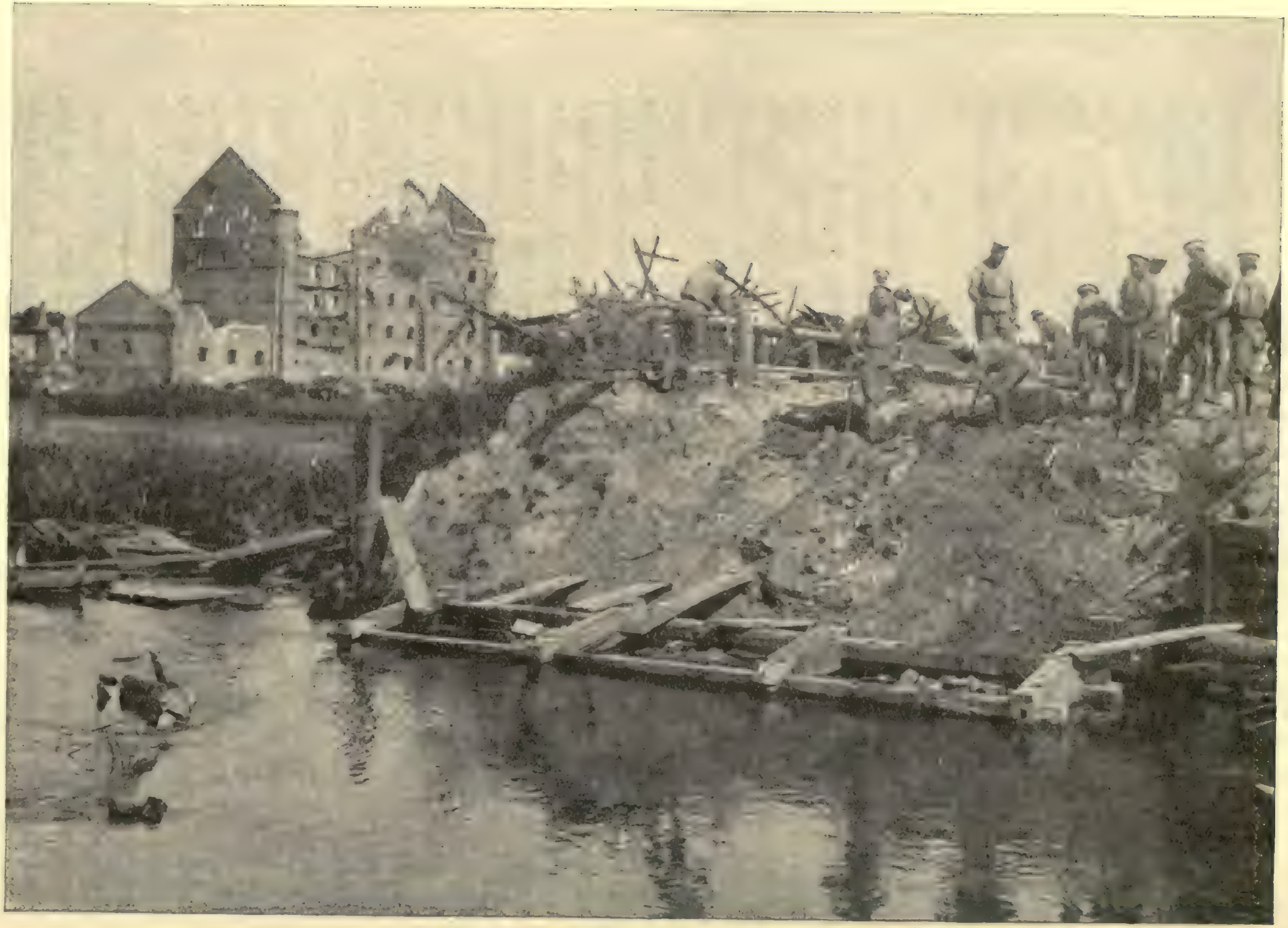
It was in the second week of July that the Germans began to make preparations for a big attempt to restore their fallen fortunes. They brought up twenty divisions and a large number of guns, with the object of breaking through the Lutsk salient. If they could do this, the whole of the Russian line to the north would be forced to fall back, and Brussilov's gains would be lost. The effort was timed for 18th July, and it was hoped that the Russians would be broken while they were exhausted by the continuous battles of the two previous weeks. Spies in the captured villages, however, gave Brussilov warning of what was coming, and he resolved to strike hard and quick before the enemy had made all his plans. On the evening of the 15th General Sakharov, who was in command of the Russian forces on the southern face of the Lutsk salient, began to move. With superior numbers he fell upon the Austro-Germans, and during the next two days not only put an end to an enemy movement eastward, but inflicted a severe defeat upon his foes, and drove them right over the Galician border. His victory was just as complete as that of General Lesh in the earlier part of the month.

Then the dry weather broke, and heavy rain began to fall; but Sakharov still pushed on, and soon Brody was in danger. The town might have been stoutly defended, but the Austrians remembered how severely they had suffered by hanging on to Lutsk, and they were unwilling to run any further risk. By the 27th Sakharov had begun to attack the very strong position which defended the threatened town. One of the most desperate battles of the whole war was fought, and again the Russians were victorious. At 6.30 on the morning of 28th July Brody fell into their hands. In the three days' fighting they



Dubno after its Capture by the Russians. [*Photo*, *The Sphere.*

The town and fortress of Dubno, which fell to Austria in September 1915, was captured by the Russians in June 1916, after heavy fighting. The enemy had strongly entrenched himself in houses and back-gardens, and was only driven out by hand-to-hand combats. With the fall of Dubno a week after the capture of Lutsk the whole of the Volhynian triangle of fortresses was again in Russian hands. Dubno stands on the had captured 940 officers and over 39,000 of other ranks, as well as 49 guns and an enormous amount of booty.

Sakharov had not yet finished his advance. Look at the map, and notice the railway which runs from Tarnopol to Lemberg. Between Brody and the railway stretches a wilderness of forest and mere, crossed by only one road. Most commanders would have advanced in a bee line for Lemberg. Not so Sakharov. He knew that this was just what the Austrians expected him to do, so he turned directly south and pushed his way through the swamps and woods. The first stage of the advance was made at night. In black darkness the Russian soldiers worked their way across the reed beds, floundering through mud or jumping from one tuft of marsh grass to another. Though they were hidden, the enemy's searchlights and star-shells revealed the movements of the rushes, and the swamp was swept with shrapnel and machine-gun fire. In spite, however, of heavy losses the Russians swept on, and before dawn had gained a footing on the firm ground on the enemy's side of the bog. In the first light of the morning they charged the Austro-German lines with the bayonet, and a stubborn fight began. The enemy brought up all his available reinforcements, but could not check the Russian onset. No quarter was asked or given. Two German regiments fought until they were almost wiped out.

By 10th August Sakharov was less than five miles from the railway, and had turned the flank of the Austrian army which was holding the section between the railway and the slopes of the Carpathians. So rapidly did he move that the Austrians had to fly for their lives at a moment's notice. In one town the dining-table of the officers' mess was found covered with the remains of a half-eaten meal, and the flowers were still on the table. In the course of his advance he captured more than 160 officers and 8,000 men.

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In Chapter XLIV. of our fifth volume I told you of the great advance which the Russians made in Bukovina during June. You will remember that by the 23rd of that month the whole of the province was once more in the hands of the Russians, and that they were fast closing in on Kolomea, the junction of six railways and six highroads. Look at the map,* and notice

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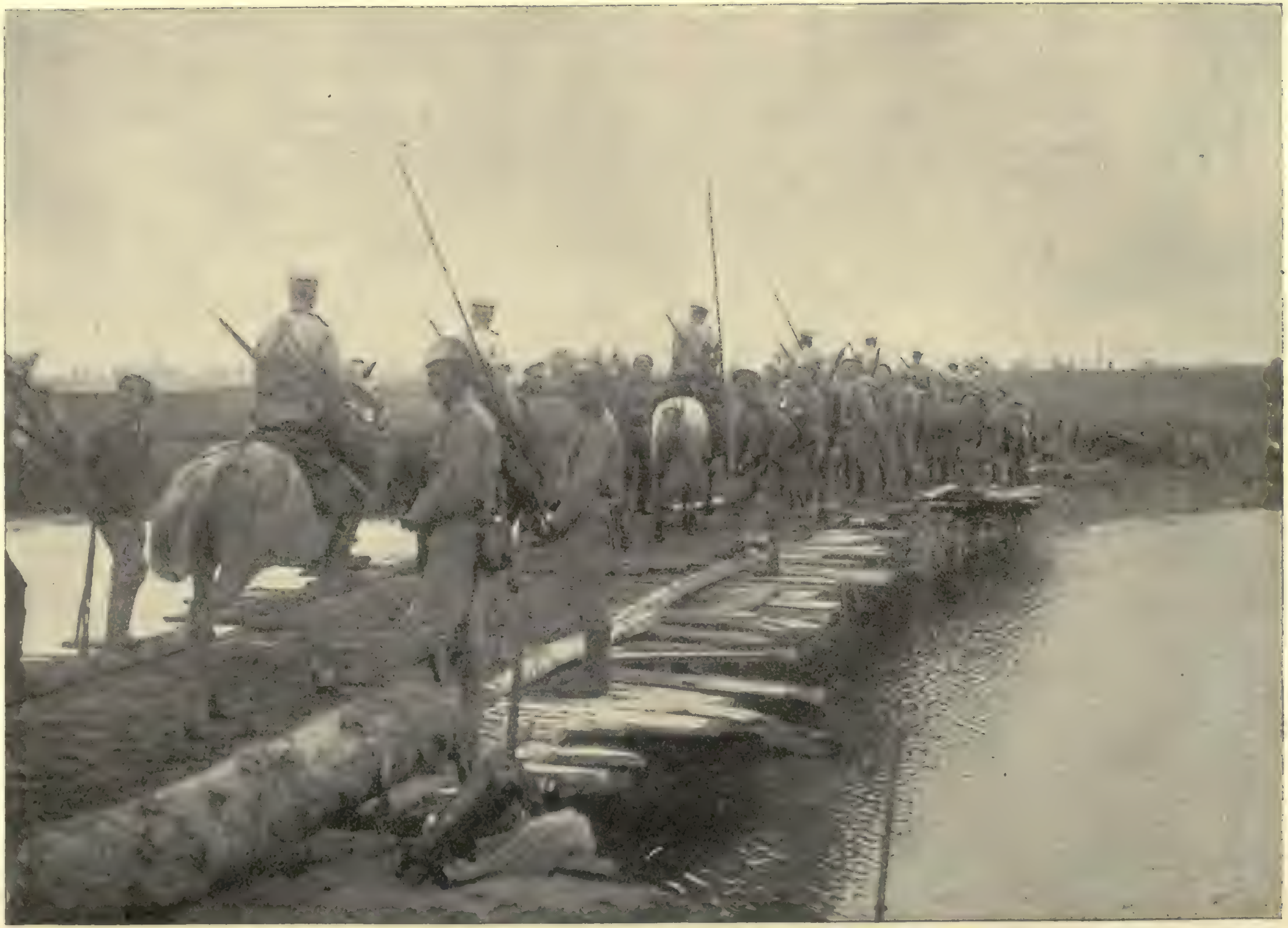
* See p. 144.



Russian Cavalry crossing a Pontoon Bridge in pursuit of the Austrians. [*Photo, The Sphere.*

The cavalry are here seen crossing a pontoon bridge hastily thrown across one of the innumerable rivers on the Russian line of advance. The rows of men on each side keep the bridge in position by their weight.

that from Kolomea runs the great trunk-line to Lemberg by way of Stanislau. This line was the main feeder of the right wing of the Austrian army, which was holding the line from the Lutsk salient to the slopes of the Carpathians. It was, therefore, all-important to cut this line, and the first step was to capture Kolomea. On 28th June, thanks largely to a brilliant flank movement by Russian cavalry to the north of the town, its defences crumbled away, and next day (29th June) Kolomea was triumphantly entered. So hastily had the Austrians left the place that the roads and railways were scarcely damaged.

The Russians pushed on from success to success. By 4th July the railway line which you see running through the Jablonitza Pass into Hungary had been cut, and four days later the important railway junction of Delatyn was captured. The Russians were now in a position to advance on Stanislau, which is an even more important meeting-place of roads and railways than Kolomea. It stands on a flat piece of open ground crossed and recrossed by many streams. In the fighting between 23rd June and 7th July more than 670 officers, nearly 31,000 men, and 18 guns had been captured.

But by this time the July rains were beginning. The rivers Pruth and Dniester were in roaring flood, and all the country south of Stanislau was under water. A halt had to be called; for only the Russian left wing, which was fighting amidst the Carpathian heights, now stood on dry ground. For nearly a month the Russian advance was held up.

By 7th August the floods had subsided sufficiently to permit a forward movement. Two days later the Russians were in possession of a railway junction just south of Stanislau. The Austrians made frenzied attempts to delay the advancing Russians. It is said that they even filled scarecrows with explosives and set them up in the fields. The moment one of these scarecrows was touched it exploded with terrific force. Frequently soldiers were left in shallow trenches to explode land mines. The Russians were now firing shells filled with a gas which put men out of action far more effectively than that used by the Germans.

The plight of Bothmer, the Austrian general, was now desperate. In the north the Russians were close to the Tarnopol-Lemberg railway, which fed his left wing. Should Stanislau fall, he would lose the railway which supplied his right wing.

There was nothing for it but to retreat. So he fell back to the Zlota Lipa,* and with this retirement ended the second stage of Brussilov's great offensive. The enemy was by no means in a comfortable position: Kovel and Lemberg were threatened, and in the south a victorious army was well on his right rear.

In ten weeks a series of marvellous successes had been won. Nearly 8,000 officers and more than 358,000 men, along with 450 guns, 1,396 machine guns, and a huge store of other war booty, had been captured, and the enemy's losses in dead and badly wounded were twice as many as the number of prisoners. It is said that south of the Pripet the enemy had lost as many men as he had arrayed on this front when the offensive began. The Germans had to transfer to the East four complete divisions from the Western front; Austria had to weaken her line on the Italian frontier; and two Turkish divisions were hurried up, in order to stop the "rot." One result of the Russian victories was to bring about great changes in the Austrian commands. Several of the generals who had failed were sent into retirement, and their places were taken by others from whom better things might be hoped. There were no changes on the Russian side, and no need for change. The Tsar's soldiers had proved themselves splendid fighters, and it was clear that their generals had learnt the most modern methods of warfare.

You will realize more fully the wonderful achievement of the Russians when you recollect that by May 1, 1915, they had exhausted all their resources of weapons and ammunition. While they were falling back during their long retreat they were short of almost everything that an army needs. And yet after six months they were able to bring to a final standstill in the barren wastes of their own country a huge and most efficient army. In the interval Russia had made a mighty effort. The Tsar had taken supreme command. He had entrusted the work of reorganizing the army, and providing it with guns, rifles, and shells, to Alexeieff, and the direction of the forces in the field to Brussilov. How well they succeeded is shown by the splendid victories which Russia won in the ten weeks of offensive which I have described.

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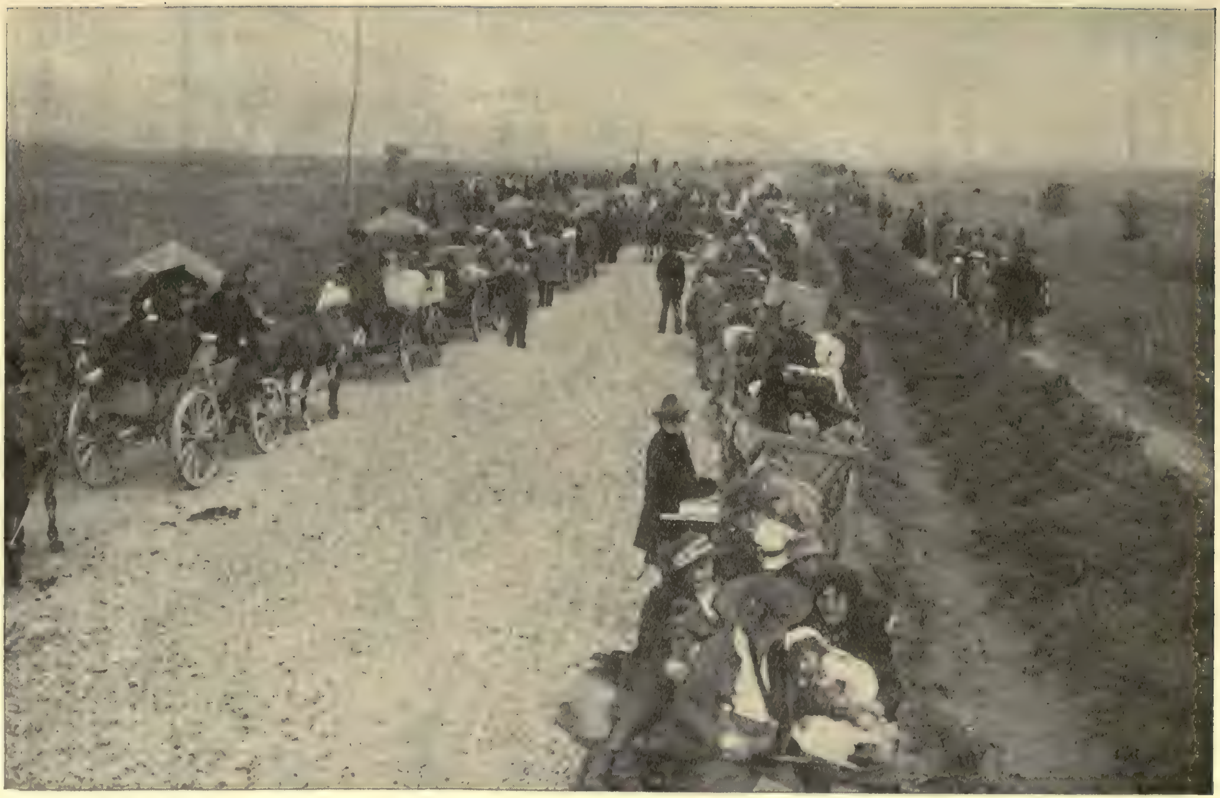
The troops which the enemy had rushed up from all quarters

* Marked X on the map, p. 144.

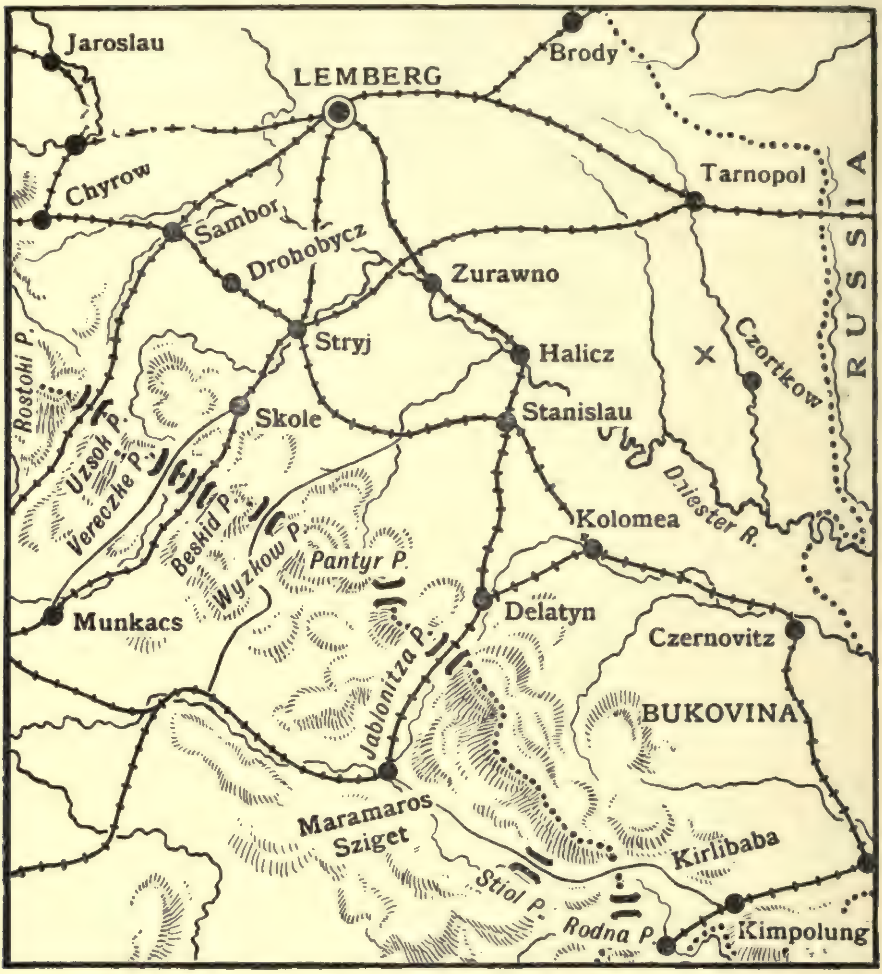


Refugees from Bukovina on the Road towards the Rumanian Frontier.

(*Photo, The Sphere.*)

When the Russians overran Bukovina terror and panic seized the people, and thousands of them took the road with such possessions as they could carry and made for the upper Carpathians.

made a stout stand in front of Halicz, which you see on the map about a dozen miles north of Stanislau, and also on the all-important railway from Brody to Lemberg. The result was that the Russians were held up. On 27th August another nation joined in the fray. Rumania declared war on Austria. The story of how she intervened in the great struggle and how she fared must be left to a later chapter.



Map to illustrate the Campaign in Bukovina and Southern Galicia.

The Dying Gladiator.

CHAPTER XV.

THE STORY OF RUMANIA.

I SUPPOSE that you have all heard or read of the gladiators who in the days of old fought to the death for the amusement of the Roman people. The poet Byron in well-known verses gives us a very striking picture of a gladiator who has fallen in the fight, and is bleeding his life away :—

> " He recked not of the life he lost, nor prize ;
> But where his rude hut by the Danube lay—
> There were his young barbarians all at play,
> There was their Dacian mother—he their sire,
> Butchered to make a Roman holiday.—
> All this rushed with his blood.—Shall he expire,
> And unavenged ?—Arise, ye Goths, and glut your ire ! "

You gather from this verse that the gladiator was not a Roman but a Dacian—a dweller by the Danube. He was, perhaps, one of ten thousand who were brought from Dacia to Rome, and forced to fight in the Coliseum. You will be interested to learn that the ancient country of Dacia, to which these men belonged, included what is now known as Rumania. It consisted of a solid block of territory lying between the Theiss * on the west, the Dniester on the east, and the Danube on the south. A large portion of Dacia, now known as Transylvania,† lay on the western side of the Carpathians, and when

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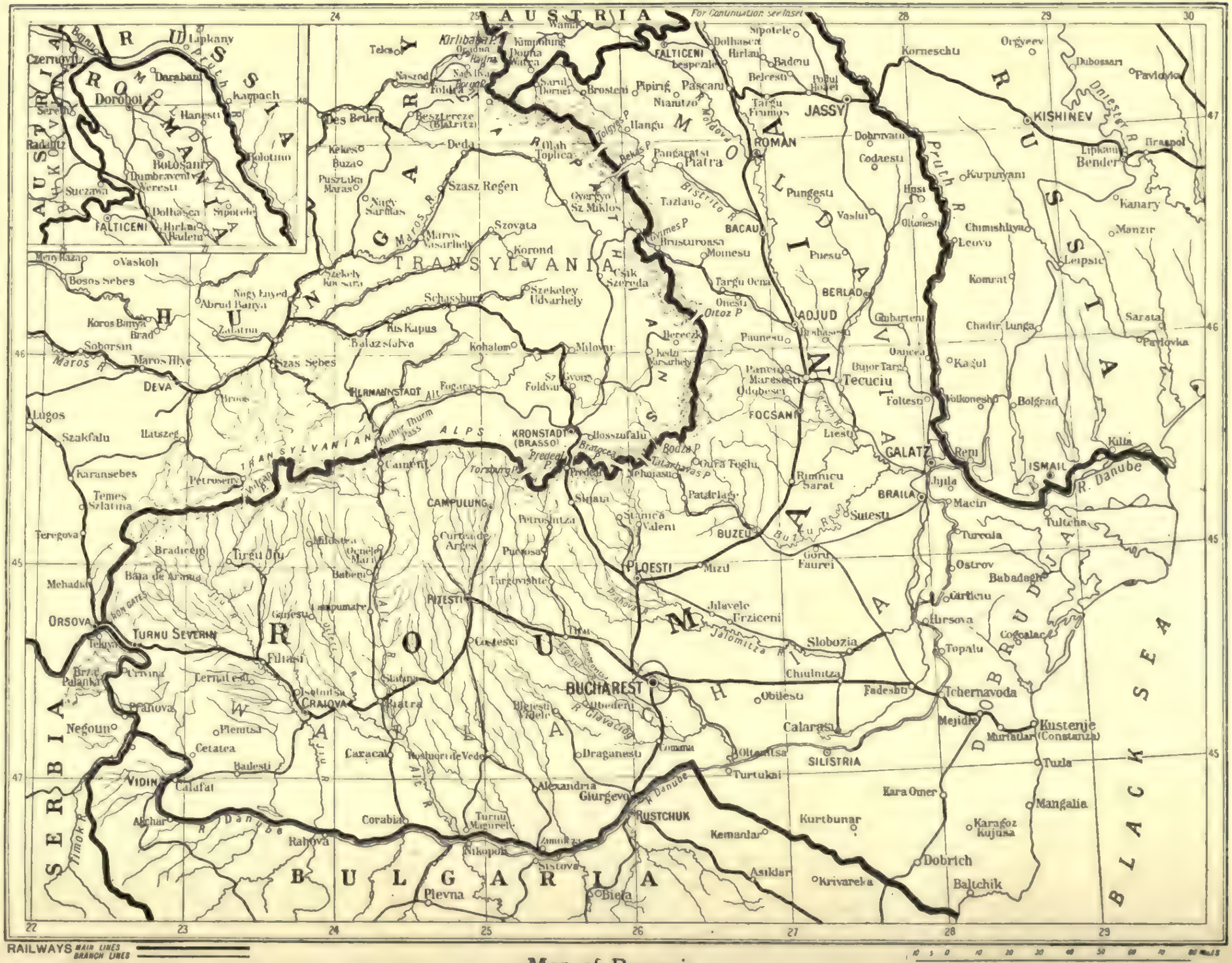
* River of Hungary, joining the Danube about 25 miles north of Belgrade.

† Derived from the Latin *trans*, across, and *silva*, woodland. The Western Carpathians are covered with dense forests of beech, pine, and fir.



Map of Rumania.

the Great War began was part of Hungary. I want you to bear this fact in mind, because, as you will see, it was the main reason why Rumania declared war on Austria-Hungary, and thus became the fifteenth nation * to take part in the vast and fateful struggle.

You cannot fully understand why Rumania joined in with the Allies without knowing something of its history. In the year 98 A.D. a great Spanish general named Trajan became Emperor of Rome. At this time Rome was stretching out her grasping hands to the East. In the year 101 Trajan sent his armies along the Danube into Dacia, and after a five years' struggle completely subdued the country, and added another great territory to the Roman Empire. In the Forum of Trajan at Rome a panel which commemorates this conquest may still be seen. He set up military stations all along the frontier, and filled them with soldiers; and having thus protected the country against the surrounding barbarians, gave it the laws and customs of the great city on the Tiber.

Dacia was discovered to be a very fertile land, and colonists flocked to it from all parts of the empire. For more than a century and a half it was part and parcel of the Roman Empire, and so deeply was Roman civilization impressed upon the people that it has never disappeared. The Rumanians adopted the Latin tongue in place of their own, and to this day their language is so full of Roman words that a Latin scholar can read their books. The Latin word *dulcis*, sweet, for example, is found in the Rumanian word *dulchasta*, which means the sweetmeats handed round at parties. The Rumanians themselves show traces of their partial descent from the Romans. The men have faces resembling those which we find on Roman coins; they are lithe and slender in body, like the Italians of to-day; and the name by which they call themselves is Romani. Dacians fought in the Roman armies, and a Dacian cohort was sent to Britain during the Roman occupation. So you see that Rumanians were first seen in Britain more than one thousand five hundred years ago.

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* The following are the dates on which the fifteen nations referred to above declared war: THE ENEMY POWERS—*Austria-Hungary,* July 28, 1914; *Germany,* August 1, 1914; *Turkey,* November 1914; *Bulgaria,* October 1915. THE ALLIES—*Serbia,* July 28, 1914; *Russia,* August 1, 1914; *Belgium,* August 2, 1914; *France,* August 3, 1914; *Great Britain,* August 4, 1914; *Montenegro,* August 7, 1914; *Japan,* August 23, 1914; *Italy,* May 1915; *Albania,* January 1916; *Portugal,* March 1916; *Rumania,* August 27, 1916.

Though many of the Rumanians have Slav blood in their veins, belong to the Greek Church, and have hundreds of Slav words in their language, they consider themselves Latins and not Slavs. It has been well said that Rumania is a Latin island in a Slav sea.

The time came when Rome began to grow feeble, and found herself incapable of holding her wide empire against the savage hordes that continually made inroads upon it. About the year 211 the Goths from the north became very troublesome. They swooped down upon Rumanian homesteads and cities, robbing and burning and killing, after the manner of the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes in Britain. Rome was forced to abandon Dacia, and thousands of the poor, harassed Rumanians took refuge amidst the Carpathians, just as the Britons found safety in the Welsh mountains. The story of the next eleven centuries is terribly confused and troubled. The Goths overran the country, and after them came the Huns, who, under their chief Attila, made themselves masters of all Central Europe from the Rhine to the Volga. Behind them came Slavs, and then a Mongolic race called the Avars. At the end of the fifth century the Bulgarians came swarming over Dacia and beyond the Danube almost to the gates of Constantinople. For a time most of the Rumanians were under Bulgarian rule.

Another wave of Mongolians, the Magyars, now appeared on the scene. At the end of the ninth century we find them settled in the valley of the Theiss, in what is now known as Hungary. By the eleventh century they were in possession of the whole of the Carpathian plateau. They did not, however, win this land without fierce struggles, in which the Rumanians of the mountains played a part.

It is impossible in these pages to give you an account of the ebb and flow of invading races in this ancient land of Dacia. The period of invasion came to an end in the thirteenth century. At this time the outer slopes of the Carpathians on both sides, from the Iron Gates of the Danube to Bukovina, were girdled with a continuous belt of Rumanians. The plains were covered with Slavs. In the course of time the Rumanians and the Slavs intermingled, and the Slavs became Romanized by the Rumanians. In the fourteenth century we find two Rumanian states in existence—Moldavia and Wallachia.

Before I proceed any further with the history of Rumania, I want you to look carefully at the map on page 146, and follow with your finger the boundary of the little kingdom as it was when war was declared in August 1916. Begin on the coast at the seaward end of the northern arm of the Danube delta. The boundary, you observe, follows this arm and the main stream to the point where the river turns south. Then it runs north along the course of the Pruth, and meets the frontier of Bukovina, after which it zigzags south and west to the Carpathians. Follow the boundary along the ridge of the mountains. It runs southward for more than a hundred miles, makes a big bulge to the west, and finally swings round to the Danube, along which it continues eastward to within a short distance of the town of Turtukai. From this point the boundary strikes south-east to the shores of the Black Sea. Now that you have traced out the frontier, you see that the country resembles in shape an ankle and a foot. The ankle is known as Moldavia ; the foot as Wallachia.

In the fourteenth century Moldavia and Wallachia were separate principalities. There could be no Rumanian kingdom until these two principalities were united. Before that happy day dawned Wallachia had to bend her neck to the Turks, who, after their capture of Constantinople in 1453, began to push their conquests northward. Moldavia had a brief period of glory about this time under her prince, Stephen the Great, one of the two great heroes of Rumania. Ballads are still sung in every Moldavian cottage to his fame. One of them runs as follows :—

" Stephen, Stephen, the great lord,
Has no equal in the world,
Except the splendid sun ! "

The ballad then goes on to tell how he set his breast to the frontiers like a strong defensive wall, and in turn beat back Tartars, Magyars, Poles, and Turks. An old story, still believed, says that he had falcons perched on the heights to give him warning of the approach of his many enemies. He ruled the country for half a century, and because he was a bulwark of Christianity against the Turks, the Pope called him the " Athlete of Christ."

Soon after the death of Stephen Moldavia also had to yield to Turkey. His son, threatened on the one hand by Poland and on the other hand by Hungary, turned for support to his father's old enemy. "For," he said, "the Turk is strong and wise, and keeps his word." Moldavia thus followed Wallachia in acknowledging the Sultan as overlord.

The brightest moment in Rumanian history was in the year 1600, when Michael, the Prince of Wallachia, rallied his countrymen and threw off the Turkish yoke. Michael the Brave is the great hero of the Rumanian race, and every Rumanian heart is stirred even now at the mention of his name. For a brief time he united Wallachia, Moldavia, and Transylvania into one kingdom, and thus realized the old and long-cherished dream of the Rumanian people—"a free and united Rumania from the Theiss to the sea." His triumph, however, was not to last long. After his death, in 1601, Rumania went to pieces, and was the prey of tumult and strife. Thenceforward, for many a long day, the Rumanian peasant besought Michael the Brave to rise from his grave and deliver him :—

"O Michael!
Why do you not feel with us too,
And save us from trouble and woe?"

Things went from bad to worse. The Rumanian throne was put up to auction by the Turks ; anybody with plenty of money could possess it. Greek adventurers, one after another, wore the purple, and ground the faces of the poor so as to make a profit out of the venture. Many of the bolder Rumanians took to the hills, and became outlaws. In the eighteenth century there was a great rising in Transylvania which drenched the land with blood from end to end. The leader of this rising was broken on the wheel; but he did not die in vain—serfdom was abolished in Transylvania.

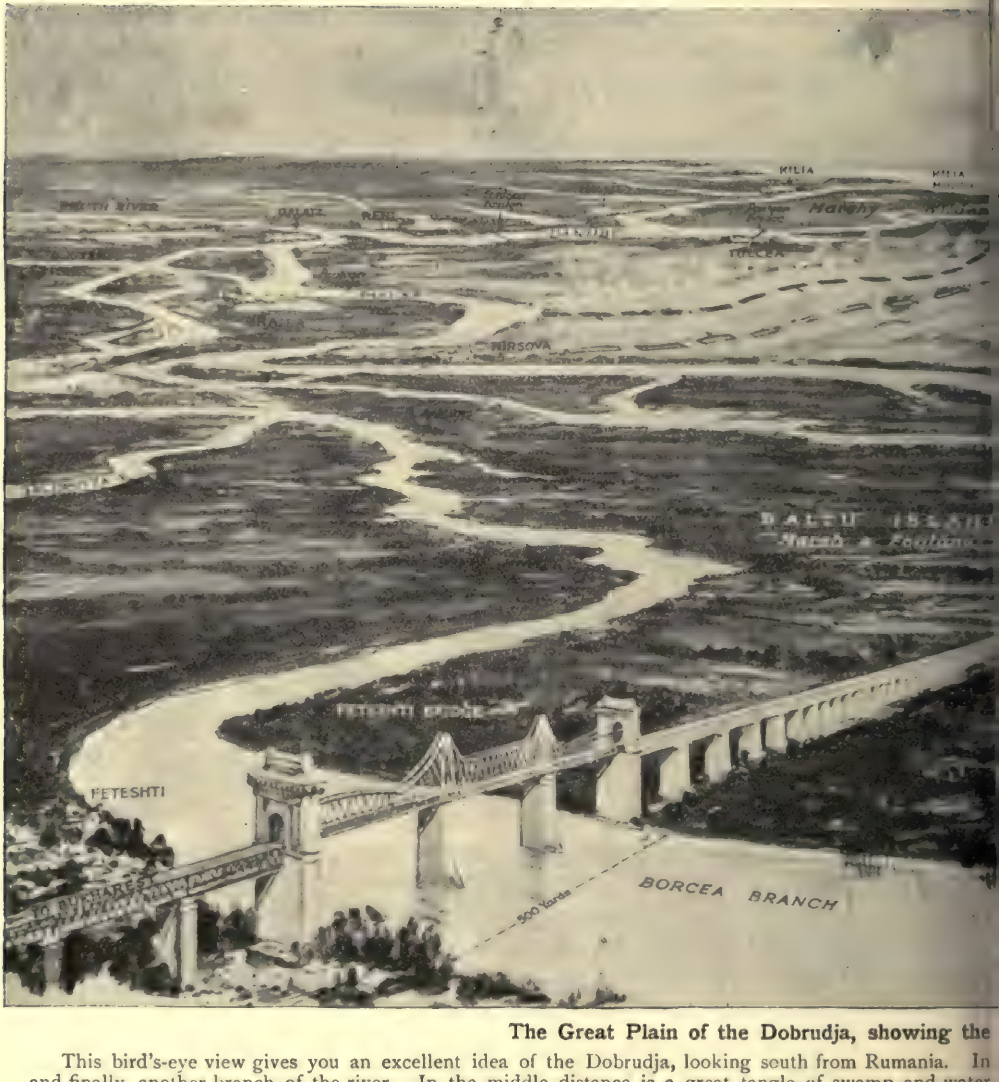
In 1775 Austria demanded the province of Bukovina, and to the dismay of the Rumanians the Turks yielded it up. An old story tells us that one night soon afterwards ghostly hands began to toll the great bell of the famous Moldavian monastery in which Stephen lay buried. The monks awoke in terror, and rushed to the church, where they saw the lights which were burning on the tomb of the great king flicker and die out. Next day the portrait of the hero was found to be dark and discoloured. The shade of Stephen was mourning over his nation's loss. Less than half a century later, Russia seized Bessarabia, the region between the Dniester and the Pruth. An old ballad which shows the bitter wrath of the Rumanians is still sung :—

> " May curses fall upon the kin,
> And the house be ever deserted,
> And the children put in prison,
> Of him who made the Russian
> Master beyond the Pruth ! "

In 1821 the Greeks rose against the Turks, and won their independence (1829). The Rumanians, inspired by their example, broke into revolt under a peasant leader, and a terrible time of blood and anguish set in. Thousands of fugitives fled to the mountains for refuge, and so fierce was the pursuit that they fitted their ox-carts with poles behind as well as in front, so that they could travel rapidly to or fro without wasting time. The revolt, however, led to an improvement in the condition of the Rumanians. The Turks now agreed that Moldavia and Wallachia should be allowed to elect their own rulers. This was a great gain. The sun of Rumania was now rising, and the time was rapidly drawing near when she was to become a united kingdom once more.

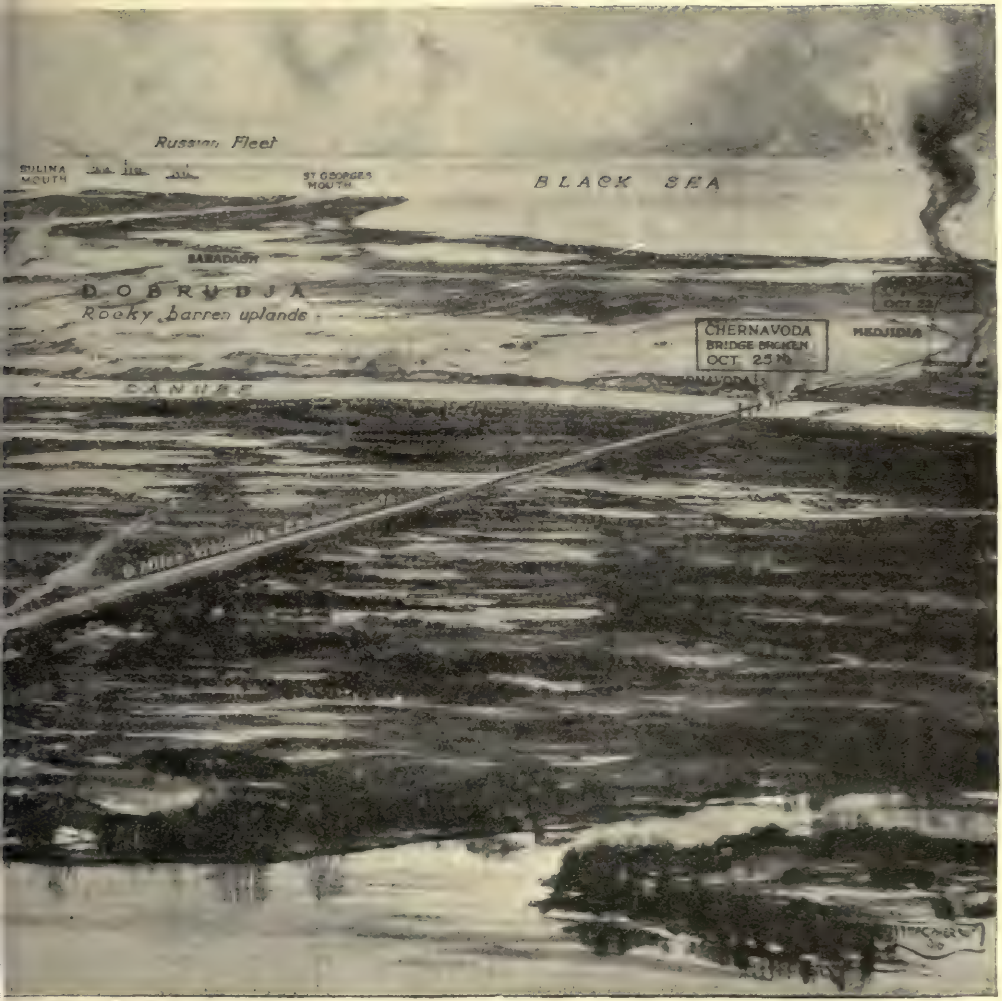
Have you ever heard of the year of revolution—1848 ? It was a year when peoples rose in almost every European country, and thrones were toppling down all over the Continent. In this fateful year the Rumanians of Wallachia, Moldavia, and Transylvania struck a fierce blow for liberty. Women fought by the side of men, and some terrible conflicts took place. Though the rising was put down by Turkish and Russian bayonets, the national spirit had caught fire, and nothing could now quench it. In 1856, at the close of the Crimean War, the Powers met at Paris, and agreed that Russia should not be overlord of the Danubian states, and that Turkey should uphold all the rights which they had won. Five years later the Powers forced the Sultan to consent to the union of Moldavia and Wallachia under one prince.

The Rumanians elected as their first prince a Moldavian landowner named Alexander John Cuza. He reigned three years, and with his reign the story of modern Rumania begins. Some good laws were passed ; but in 1866 he was deposed



The Great Plain of the Dobrudja, showing the

This bird's-eye view gives you an excellent idea of the Dobrudja, looking south from Rumania. In and finally, another branch of the river. In the middle distance is a great tangle of swamp and water the Germans captured on 22nd October, and between Chernavoda and Constanza a portion of Trajan's Hirsova, on a spur of marshland pushing out westward into the stream; also Braila, an important river city of Rumania, with about 70,000 inhabitants. Near Galatz, you will notice, the Pruth flows into the in connection with pp. 158–160.



Course of the Danube from Chernavoda to the Sea.

the foreground is seen the Chernavoda Bridge, crossing a branch of the Danube ; then nine miles of marshes ; course, and in the background a dry upland country. On the Black Sea is the port of Constanza, which Wall is shown. Follow the course of the river from Constanza in the direction of the arrow. Notice side port famous for the export of grain. Still following the main stream you arrive at Galatz, the third Danube, and forms the political boundary between Rumania and Russia. This diagram should be studied because, it is said, of his extravagance. Then the people elected Prince Charles (Carol) of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen,* a German belonging to the same family as the Kaiser William. During the Russo-Turkish War of 1877 Prince Charles led his troops against the Turks, and fought bravely on the side of Russia. On the battlefields of Bulgaria he won independence for his adopted country. In 1881 he became King of Rumania, and an iron crown made from the guns captured at Plevna † was placed on his head. Twelve years previously he had married a German princess named Elizabeth. She was a poetess, and wrote many books. Perhaps you have heard of her under her pen-name—"Carmen Sylva." ‡

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Before I pass on to tell you something about the geography of Rumania, let me remind you that though the Rumanians had won their independence, and had set up as a kingdom, they still cast longing eyes upon the "unredeemed Rumania" beyond the Carpathians. Just as Italy, on the other side of Austria, had never ceased to hope for the time when the Trentino with its Italian inhabitants would once again be united with the mother country, so the Rumanians always cherished a strong desire to win back Transylvania. They had an excellent right to the country; none better. It was stolen from them in the old days, and in the main is inhabited by Rumanians. There are many races in Transylvania, but the Rumanians make up about 60 per cent. of the total population. Their rulers, the Magyars, only number about one in four of the inhabitants, and for many years their rule has been harsh and unjust. You cannot blame the "free Rumanians" for wishing to liberate their kinsmen from the Magyar yoke and add their old possession, Transylvania, to their present kingdom.

Nor did the Rumanians ardently desire to win back Transylvania only, but Bukovina as well. When the Great War began it was in the hands of the Russians, who had annexed it after the war of 1877. You will soon learn that, before the Rumanians agreed to throw in their lot with the Allies, they made a bargain with Russia that Bessarabia should be given back to them at the end of the war.

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* In the south of Germany, between the Neckar and Lake Constance. Along with the twin principality of Hohenzollern-Hechingen, it covers an area of 441 square miles. The castle of Hohenzollern stands on a steep hill close to Hechingen.

† Town, Bulgaria, 100 miles south of Bucharest. In 1877 it was the scene of a series of battles between the Turks and the Russians, and of a memorable siege, when Osman Pasha surrendered with 40,000 men.

‡ She was born in 1843, and died March 2, 1916.

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In earlier pages of this chapter I told you what an important part the Carpathians played in preserving the Rumanian race. What the mountains of Wales were to the Welsh, the Carpathians were to the Rumanians. They form, as you know, the western frontier of Moldavia, and the northern and western boundary of Wallachia. They do not consist of towering peaks clad with everlasting ice, such as we find in the Alps, but are much lower, and consist of many chains, the slopes of which are covered with dense woodlands and rich vegetation. Nowhere in Europe can you find hills clothed with a thicker cloak of forest, or with a richer garment of plants and flowers. A writer tells us that for hundreds of years the Carpathian region has been a land of honey. The edelweiss grows on the higher levels. Then come white and blue crocuses, which bloom early in spring to trim with a gorgeous hem the white robe of the retreating snow. Lower down you find the hyacinth, the cowslip, and the violet; and, lowest of all, a multitude of field flowers which dapple the hayfields with the brightest of colours. Bears, wolves, and foxes live in woods, and sometimes one may see the lynx, the marten, and the shy chamois. Herds of stags and hinds roam over the mountains, and innumerable birds fill the woodlands with song.

You can easily understand that the Carpathians are an important buttress of defence to Rumania ; but you must not suppose that they are difficult to cross. There are nine important passes, most of which are crossed by good roads, and some by railways as well. The easier passes lie between Wallachia and Transylvania, and we need only consider these now. Turn to the map on page 146, and follow the main railway from Bucharest, the capital, into Transylvania. It runs, you will notice, past the town of Ploesti,* and then makes directly for the mountains. Passing under them by means of a tunnel it reaches the Austrian town of Kronstadt, or Brasso, as the Rumanians prefer to call it. A good and not difficult road runs across this pass, which is known as the Predeal Pass. Further west you will find

* *Plo-yesht'.*

the Red Tower Pass, which is only 1,455 feet high, and is not so much a pass as a narrow cleft through the mountains. Through it flows the river Aluta (Olt), which you will observe is a southward-flowing tributary of the Danube. A railway and a good road cross the Red Tower Pass, and lead to the Hungarian town of Hermannstadt. Still further west there is a loftier and a narrower pass, known as the Vulkan Pass, and at the Iron Gates of the Danube the main railway from Bucharest to Budapest, the capital of Hungary, runs between the mountains and the river.

By broad and gentle terraces the Carpathians slope to the Danube in the south and to the Pruth in the east. Many rivers cross the plain, bringing life and fertility to the black earth, which yields wheat, barley, oats, millet, and sugar-beet in great abundance. The Rumanian plain is one of the richest agricultural regions on earth. It is rich, too, in petroleum, which is now so necessary for the motors used in warfare. The oil wells are found near Ploesti, which is a prosperous town of over 45,000 inhabitants. Prior to the outbreak of war most of the workmen in the oil district were Italians. Some of the wells were in British and American hands, though most of them belonged to Germans.

You already know that the Danube forms the southern boundary of Rumania for about three hundred miles. So important is this great river that I must try to give you some idea of it. Let us suppose that we have boarded a river steamer at the Bulgarian town of Vidin, and that we are bound for the Black Sea. Vidin, we discover, is a bustling, active place, with a long thoroughfare bordered by trees, painted houses, and cafés. Above the town frowns a great citadel, and in its shadow lies the squalid Mohammedan quarter. There is a large and busy market-place, which is always thronged with people. As we wait for our vessel to cast off, we see caravans of clumsy native carts drawn by oxen or buffaloes, and everywhere a queer medley of races. Rumanian shepherds, with brown faces and brown eyes, muffled in brown cloaks, wearing brown leg-wrappings and brown sandals, pass by blowing wild melodies on brown reed pipes as they lead their brown sheep to the market-place. We also see Greeks, Jews, Serbs, and Tartars. We shall be sure to admire the Rumanian women, for they are renowned for their good looks. There is an old saying that "God gave the Român women beauty in exchange for happiness."

Soon after leaving Vidin the Danube changes its course from south to east. "Hamlets and towns slip by one after the other, each shining whitely against the low, drab, grassy, willow-grown banks and the muddy shore, where, at intervals amongst the reeds and drying fishing-nets, children are bathing and disporting themselves in the shallows." We pass several Rumanian ports, but they do not appear to have much trade. As we proceed, we find ourselves greatly troubled by swarms of mosquitoes—the scourge of the Danube valley.

On we go, past marshes, lagoons, and solitary lakes which fringe the river on either side. Occasionally bustards, duck, geese, and swans fly up in a whirl from the reeds where millions of frogs keep up a perpetual croak. On the Rumanian shore we see now and then lonely sentries, looking across the broad stream, or catch a glimpse of ox-wagons crawling along the roads on the horizon. We pause at Sistova, the town at which the Russians crossed the Danube by a pontoon bridge when they marched south to beat the Turks in 1877.

Rustchuk, on the Bulgarian shore, fades away in the distance, and our next stop is at Giurgevo,* the port of Bucharest. We notice that Giurgevo is not very Eastern in appearance; and we are not surprised, for Rumania, "though in the East, is not of the East."

> "The streets are thronged with light-hearted, handsome Româns; smart, brown-uniformed officers and soldiers, white and blue and scarlet clad peasants, shepherds, priests of the Orthodox faith; hairy red pigs, sheep, droves of geese and turkeys, fawn-coloured oxen; dainty Parisian-attired ladies of fashion, bullock-wagons, and motor cars." †

Through flat and featureless scenery we push on for thirty miles or so to Turtukai, beyond which the banks rise, and there are many islets in the stream, all gay with vines, poplars, willows, and wild flowers. Silistria, one of the strongest fortresses on the Danube, now comes in view, standing on a neck of land jutting out into the stream. From this point onwards we have Rumanian territory on both sides of us. After the Balkan

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* *Joor-jay'vo.*

† From "The Rumanian Danube" (*Fortnightly Review*, December 1916), by Right Hon. W. F. Bailey and Jean V. Bates.

Wars of 1912–13 the Bulgars were forced to give up to the Rumanians a strip of land between the river and the sea. Soon after leaving Silistria the river swings round to the north, and for 150 miles flows parallel to the coast. The scenery now grows very dreary. On the right are grassy hills, and to the left are marshes, crossed and recrossed by the branches of the main stream. Everywhere there is black, sticky mud, which after sundown gives up gases which smell horribly and breed disease. From this point to the sea, every dweller in the valley has " the dreaded Danube fever " in his blood.

We are in the Dobrudja,* which means " good pasture," but to us seems " a forsaken land, a wilderness, a land where no man dwelleth." The Danube winds and curves across these dreary levels; sometimes shallow, sometimes deep, sometimes flowing round sprawling, marshy islands, two of which are more than forty miles in length and about ten in breadth.

> " Look there to the left across the rising grassy desert of the Baragan. Parched under the burning summer sun, the steppe drifts and rolls away, far as the eye can reach. The soil is yellow, and the whole landscape is touched by the same dead, dull hue. Out there is a desert—a desert whose monotony is broken only by a few yellow roads or tracks, where the saffron dust lies a foot deep, to rise in blinding, choking clouds with the passing of every wandering bullock caravan, or sheep or swine herd. Sometimes the grass gives place to maize, but both grass and maize are yellow—yellow grass covering a boundless, undulating, melancholy desert. Here and there at rare intervals are villages, or rather clusters of rude clay, wattle-roofed huts, surrounded by tall, tumble-down wattle fences. Summer may be terrible here, but winter is still more awful—when the snow covers the face of the earth; when the fierce Russian wind sweeps by with hurricane force, leaving men frozen stark in death; when the wolves muster to satisfy their hunger, and the ravens croak over the icy fields. Civilization cannot tame the Dobrudja; civilization may bring railways and bridges, but the homes and thoughts and customs of the inhabitants are not more civilized to-day than they were in the days of the Roman Conquest."

At Chernavoda—which means " black water "—civilization does bring both a railway and a bridge—one of the most remarkable bridges in the world.† For over twelve and a half miles the railway is carried across river and swamp on a lofty viaduct, with innumerable light and graceful arches, to link up Bucharest, the capital of Rumania, with its chief port, Constanza, on the Black Sea. It was built by Rumanian engineers,

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* *Do-broo'jā.*

† See pp. 152–3.

King Ferdinand of Rumania watching a Review of his Troops.

(*By permission of The Sphere.*)

King Ferdinand succeeded to the throne on the death of his uncle, King Carol, in October 1914. His wife, Queen Marie, is an English princess and first cousin to King George and the Tsar. Among his near relatives are the King of the Belgians and King Ferdinand of Bulgaria.

at a cost of £1,500,000, and was opened in 1894. It at once gave the port of Constanza a new lease of life. Modern docks were built, and great efforts were made to attract trade.

Lower down, near Hirsova, the scenery changes, and becomes hilly and beautiful. Beyond this point it is difficult for voyagers on the Danube to realize that they are sailing on a river and not on the open sea. The next stopping-place is Braila, a place of big granaries and factories. Then comes the busy port of Galatz, beyond which the river writhes and twists eastward. It then breaks into three branches, which struggle across the swampy, unhealthy delta to the Black Sea. The main channel is known as the Sulina, and it is always alive with vessels, silently moving seaward or proceeding upstream.

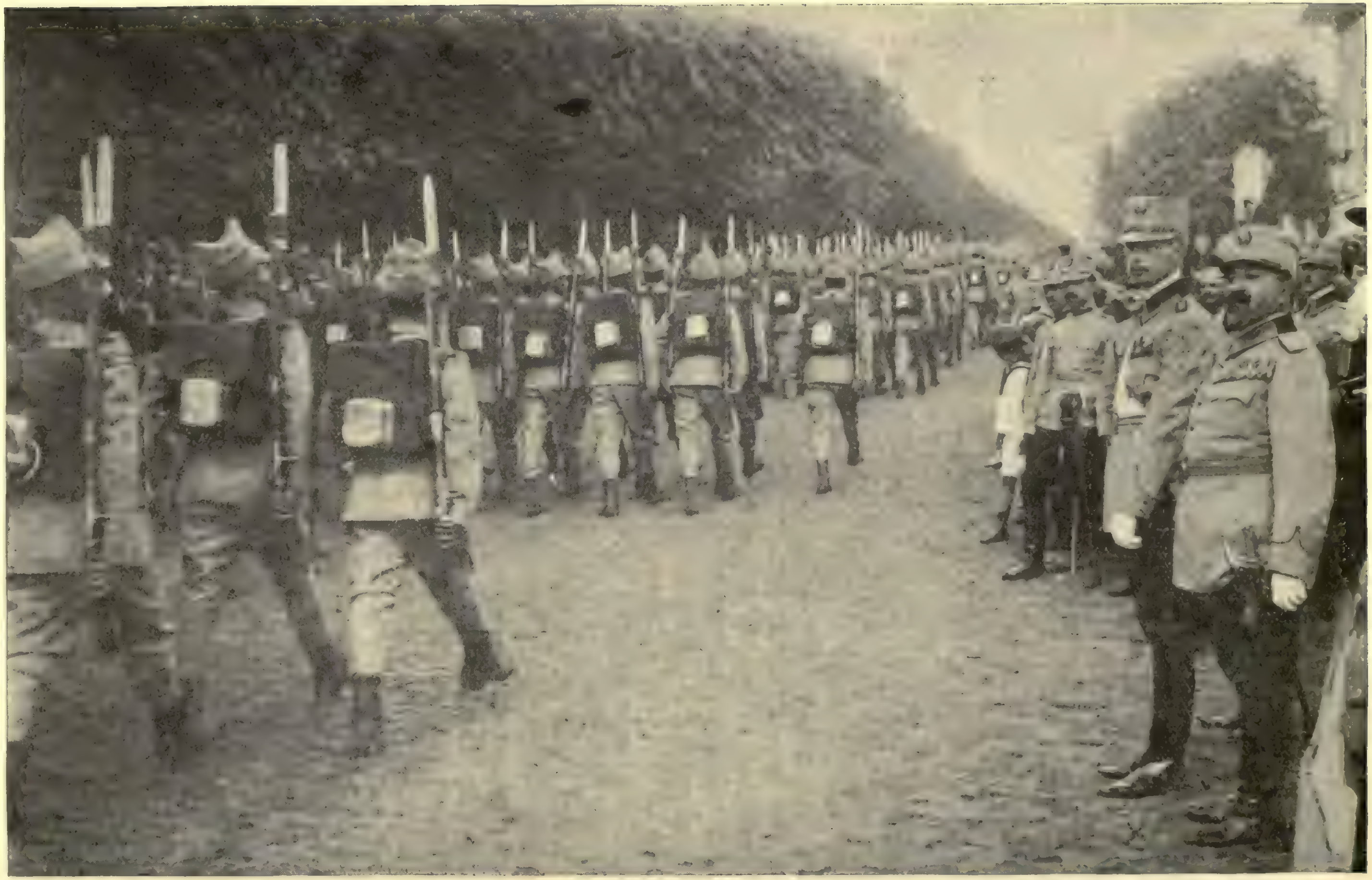
CHAPTER XVI.

RUMANIA AT WAR.

KING CAROL was a German, married to a German wife, and he naturally strove to bring about friendly relations between the land of his birth and his adopted country. During the forty-four years of his reign Germany became all powerful in the money affairs and trade of Rumania. She lent the Rumanian Government more than thirty millions of money, built railways, improved the ports, and managed to get most of the oil fields and the forests into her hands. Rumania was thus drawn very close to Germany, and in 1883 she was persuaded to sign a secret agreement and become a member of the Triple Alliance.

You will remember that the Triple Alliance included Austria-Hungary. Rumanian friendship with Germany, therefore, meant friendship with Austria-Hungary, and this was not at all to the liking of the common people. They hated the Hungarians bitterly, and they would have preferred to ally themselves with Russia and France; but they had no say in the matter. They looked across the mountains, and saw the Rumanians of Transylvania under the Magyar yoke—forbidden to use their own language, punished for remaining true to the Orthodox Church, and juggled out of their parliamentary rights. They greatly longed to set free their enslaved kinsmen, and leagues were formed to watch over their interests, and to keep the flame of national desire burning.

I want you to notice that at the outbreak of the Great War the people of Rumania and Italy stood in much the same relation to Austria. Both countries were members of the Triple Alliance; yet most Rumanians and Italians hated Austria-Hungary, one of the members of the Alliance. They desired



Departure of a Rumanian Regiment for the Front. [*By permission of The Sphere.*

King Carol is seen on the right watching the troops march away.

to win back an "unredeemed" part of Austria-Hungary, and yet they were united by a treaty with the Power that held their kinsmen in thrall.

In the early days of August 1914 Rumania had to make up her mind whether she would join in the war or remain neutral. King Carol, as a German, wished to join the Central Powers, and he considered that Rumania was bound by treaty to go to the help of Austria. But the members of his Government took a different view. They said, just as Italy had said, that they had only agreed to help Austria if she were attacked: Austria was the attacking party, and not the party attacked. At a council held on 4th August King Carol found himself almost alone in desiring to fight for the Central Powers. His Government decided to remain neutral, and he was forced to agree to this course. Two months later (October 10, 1914) he died, and it is said that his end was hastened by his bitter disappointment.

The new king was his nephew Ferdinand, who had married a daughter of the Duke of Edinburgh, and was therefore a granddaughter of Queen Victoria. Ferdinand had no special liking for Germany, and his wife made no secret of her sympathy with Britain, France, and Russia. Rumania was still bent on remaining neutral, but she was gradually drawing nearer and nearer to the Allies. The horrible deeds of the Germans in Belgium had shocked the Rumanians; and the plans which the Kaiser had made to extend German power right through the Balkans, and on through Asia Minor to the Persian Gulf, made them fear for their independence. Further, as they prided themselves on being Latins, they felt that they ought to be on the side of France and Italy.

For two years Rumania remained strictly neutral; but after the death of King Carol we in the West constantly heard rumours that she was about to declare in our favour. In January 1915, when the Russians advanced into Bukovina, it seemed that the day of Rumania's action was very near. Britain lent her £5,000,000, and she called out her reserves. Meanwhile she was trying to come to some arrangement with Russia as to her reward for joining in the fray. I need not tell you that her price was the possession of "unredeemed" Rumania —Transylvania and Bukovina.

There was another and an even more important question to be settled before she could set her armies in motion: she must have munitions, and these could only come from the Western Allies. Rumania, like Russia, is an agricultural and not a manufacturing country, and she has no steel works and few factories which can be transformed into gun and shell shops. Munitions could only reach her readily and steadily from the West by way of the Dardanelles. Before, therefore, she could be continuously supplied with munitions, the road from the Mediterranean to the Black Sea must be cleared. Our naval attack on the Dardanelles failed, and shortly afterwards the Russians were forced by Mackensen's tempest of fire to begin their long retreat. Rumania very wisely drew back; she dared not join in at such an awkward time, and court the defeat which then seemed to be the lot of the Allies.

The Rumanian Government had now, to use a Derbyshire phrase, "to carry the dish very level." Any sign of special favour to the Allies would be sure to bring down upon her the wrath of the Central Powers. While she refused to allow munitions of war for Turkey to pass through her country, she was obliged, on the other hand, to permit Austria to buy part of her wheat crop. The Central Powers tried every kind of persuasion, and even threats, to force the Rumanians to join them, but in vain. They still remained strictly neutral, and when they saw Bulgaria take the field and, with the help of Austria, completely overrun Serbia, they feared that a similar fate would be theirs if they made one false step. But even though the Government dared not move, certain sections of the people were eager to fight. Students made great demonstrations in Bucharest, but the Prime Minister refused to be hurried into action. He was waiting for a better opportunity. He allowed both Britain and Austria-Germany to buy Rumanian wheat, and his policy of "playing for time" was supported by both Houses of Parliament.

So the days wore on until June 1916, when the Russians began their great advance and swept all before them. By the end of the month Bukovina was in Russian hands once more, and the Allies on the Somme had begun their great offensive. Rumania's hour, it seemed, had now arrived. Unhappily she still delayed, and by doing so missed her opportunity. She came in too late, and when she did so, plunged herself into disaster.

Before I tell you how she flung down the gage of battle, let us see what sort of army she had. In June 1916 she was probably able to put into the field 450,000 men, with a reserve of about 150,000 trained soldiers and 100,000 who had received no military instruction. The 450,000 men of the active army were organized in ten army corps, comprising twenty divisions, each division being rather more than 20,000 strong, with forty-eight guns. Most of the soldiers were drawn from the peasant class, and though perhaps they were not so tough as the Bulgars, they were quicker on their feet and more alert in mind. Their officers were without experience in war, but they had been well trained, and it was thought that they would make a good show against any enemy. Unhappily, they proved unequal to the strain of a great modern war, and made many and grievous mistakes. Rumania's great weakness, you will remember, was her lack of munitions. She had no means of manufacturing the huge quantities of shell required in modern warfare, but had to rely upon the supplies which the Allies could send to her through Russia. During the month of July she received large stocks, but it was clear from the first that she could only continue to fight so long as she was regularly and steadily supplied.

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On 17th July there was a great war demonstration in the capital, and a few days later the Rumanians finally made up their minds to fight on the side of the Allies. On 27th August the King attended a council of all the political leaders in the country, and by a great majority it decided to declare war on Austria-Hungary. A Note was sent to that country setting forth the reasons why Rumania had decided to draw the sword. The chief reason was, of course, the ill-treatment of the Transylvanian Rumanians. War was declared on Austria-Hungary the same day. To the army the King sent this message :—

" *The shades of Michael the Brave and Stephen the Great, whose remains rest in the lands you march to deliver, will lead you to victory.*"

He also appealed to the people in the name of the same great heroes. " It is for us to-day," he said, " to deliver from the foreign yoke our brothers beyond the mountains and in the land of Bukovina. . . . In us, in the virtues of our race, in our courage, lives that potent spirit which will give them once more the right to prosper in peace, to follow the customs of their ancestors, and to make real our hopes of a free and united Rumania from the Theiss to the sea."

Rumania, you will notice, had only declared war on Austria-Hungary. If, however, she supposed that she would only have to fight one foe, she was grievously mistaken. Germany soon showed that Austria's quarrel was hers. On 28th August she declared war on Rumania, and on 1st September Bulgaria followed suit.

The news that Rumania had declared war was received with delight by the Allies, who believed that a powerful recruit had come to their assistance. The Central Powers, with their dwindling numbers, would now have to struggle on an additional front of several hundred miles against a new and fresh army of about half a million men. Further, the Germans and Austrians could no longer draw wheat and oil from Rumania's vast stores. In the West, therefore, it was believed that another step towards victory had been taken. The Germans, however, had long foreseen that Rumania would take the field against them, and, strange as it may seem, they were not sorry to see her come in. They were being pressed very hard on all their fronts, and they feared that if the Allies acted together and continued the pressure, the day would soon come when they would go to pieces. If only the Allies would begin an adventure somewhere away from the main fronts, all might yet be well. When Rumania declared war it seemed likely that this would be done.

The Germans hoped that Rumania would be tempted to invade Transylvania—that is, would carry on a little war of her own, instead of joining the other allies in a united movement. Should Rumania make this blunder, the Germans meant to set upon her with all the strength that they could muster. Then, when she was in a desperate position, they knew that Russia would have to come to her aid, and that the British and French would have to send large reinforcements to Salonika in order to strengthen General Sarrail, against whom they might advance once Rumania was overthrown. In this way troops which were meant for the main fronts would be drawn off to distant parts, and the pressure of the Allies would be slackened just where it was becoming most dangerous. This is what actually happened, and the blunder of the Rumanians enabled the Germans to pluck an advantage out of what seemed at first sight to be a misfortune.

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On the night of August 27, 1916, the Rumanian armies were set in motion all along the frontier of Transylvania. They advanced rapidly, and took the enemy by surprise.* The whole of the passes were secured without serious fighting, the small Hungarian garrisons either surrendering or falling back before the invaders. By 7th September they held the western slopes of the frontier hills. Pushing through the Predeal Pass (see pp. 172–173) they captured Kronstadt; an advance through the Red Tower Pass brought them near to Hermannstadt; and another column, threading the Vulcan Pass, seized Petroseny. Only at the defile of the Iron Gates was there any opposition. In the course of a five days' battle Orsova was captured, and the Iron Gates were closed. By the end of September the Rumanians were able to announce that they had occupied about one-third of the whole area of Transylvania—that is, some seven thousand square miles of the land inhabited by their oppressed kinsmen.

So far all had gone well; but the real tug-of-war at this time was taking place not north but south of the Danube, where, on 2nd September, an army, said to consist of 25,000 Germans, 40,000 Bulgarians, and 10,000 Turks, was assembled. It was under the command of Mackensen, the general who broke the Russian front on the Donajetz in April 1915 by sheer weight of artillery. Mackensen with a huge force of big guns marched very rapidly, according to his custom, and attacked at Turtukai one of the three or four Rumanian divisions which had been left to guard the hundred miles of river front. His big guns smashed the defences, just as they had destroyed those of the Russians in Galicia; and the garrison, having no bridge by which to retreat across the broad river, was soon in terrible straits. Another division marched to its relief from Silistria; but it too was overcome, and on 6th September Mackensen captured 462 officers and 25,000 men, along with 100 guns and 69 machine guns. Thus "bad begins, but worse remains behind."

While the battle was proceeding at Turtukai, Mackensen's right wing was winning a success farther to the east. On 7th

* See picture, p. 169.

September a mixed force of Russians and Rumanians was defeated, and 3,000 more prisoners and thirty additional guns were captured. The remnants of this force fell back to a line crossing the highroad from Silistria to the port of Constanza. Mackensen entered Silistria on the 10th, only to find it empty of troops and empty of booty. He followed up the retreating Rumanians, and near Lake Olteria, about twenty miles north-east of Silistria, overtook them. A pitched battle was fought, another victory was won, and our Allies retired to a line which had been previously prepared between Rasova, on the Danube, and Lake Tulza, near the coast of the Black Sea.

There was huge delight in Germany when the news of this series of victories arrived. The Kaiser outdid himself, and sent a wild telegram to his Allies, announcing the "complete destruction" of the Rumanian army and the winning of a "decisive" victory.

Look carefully at the map (page 146) and notice what Mackensen was really aiming at. Find the Rumanian port of Constanza, on the Black Sea, and follow the railway to the Danube. You see that it crosses the river by the Chernavoda bridge, which I have already described. It is the only bridge across the Danube for a stretch of 200 miles, and the only place in Rumania where a railway is carried across the river and the broad belt of marshes on both banks of the stream. All the other railways of Rumania come down to the neighbourhood of the river or to the waterside, and there cease. If Mackensen could seize the Chernavoda bridge, he would supply himself with a splendid railway route into the heart of Rumania; if he could capture Constanza, he could prevent the Russians from sending succour to the Rumanians by sea. He therefore aimed at Constanza and the Chernavoda bridge.

Look carefully at the Dobrudja, in which Mackensen was operating. You notice that it is shaped something like an egg-boiler, and that its waist, or narrowest portion, is marked by the line of railway from Constanza to the Chernavoda bridge. The trench line which the Rumanians had prepared before the war ran along the crest of the higher ground from the Danube to the sea, and covered this railway at a distance of some eighteen thousand yards to the south of it. Mackensen pushed towards this line; but on the 16th September and the four following days, when he was about six or seven miles from it,

A Modern Horse of Troy: a Rumanian Surprise.

(*By permission of The Illustrated London News.*)

On the first day of war the Rumanians asked the Hungarians to fetch back from the Rumanian side of the frontier a Hungarian train. The enemy, expecting to find the train full of grain, did so. Imagine their surprise when the train stopped at a Hungarian station and poured forth not wheat but men. The Hungarian soldiers were so amazed that they made little or no resistance.

he was checked. He made desperate efforts to break through, but was held by a mixed force of Russians, Rumanians, and Serbians. Our Allies stood firm, and Mackensen could make no headway. Reinforcements for the Allies arrived on the evening of the 19th, and they were able to make a strong offensive. On the 20th they forced Mackensen to retreat, and as he did so he burned the villages behind him. It is said that 5,000 dead or dying Bulgarians were left on the field. So much for the Kaiser's "decisive victory."

Mackensen, thus foiled, fell back to a position parallel with and some five or more miles south of the Rumanian line, and there entrenched himself. He made no further advance until 19th October, when he broke through on the left or Black Sea end of the Rumanian line. The Allies fell back to the north-east, and in doing so abandoned both the bridgehead of Chernavoda and the port of Constanza. Mackensen entered the port on 22nd October, and three days later he was in possession of the bridgehead of Chernavoda. He had attained the main objects of his great thrust, but he discovered that the retreating enemy had so far destroyed the main bridge as to render it impassable.

The Allies managed to make a brief stand in the hilly region to the north, and then retired to positions on the high ground between Ostrov and the sea. Mackensen pushed on to Hirsova, where he was obliged to call a halt, because his enemy was now too strong for him. You will see the lines of friend and foe marked on the diagram (pp. 152–153). As soon as General Alexeieff had heard of Mackensen's victory he sent General Sakharoff from Galicia to the Dobrudja with reinforcements of men and guns. Sakharoff arrived on 3rd November, and immediately fell upon Mackensen's troops and drove them back to an entrenched line on the "waist" of the region, just north of the Constanza–Chernavoda railway. Hirsova was recovered, and Mackensen was firmly held.

From this position he was unable to move until the middle of December, when, reinforced by another army, he advanced once more. On 5th December a fierce battle began, during which the Allies made seven desperate attacks, all of which were repulsed. British armoured cars took part in the battle, and the Bulgarians falsely announced that two of them had been destroyed. Thereafter the Rumanians decided to abandon the Dobrudja altogether, but to delay the enemy's advance by rearguard actions. They were in dire straits in Wallachia, and the outlook was black indeed.

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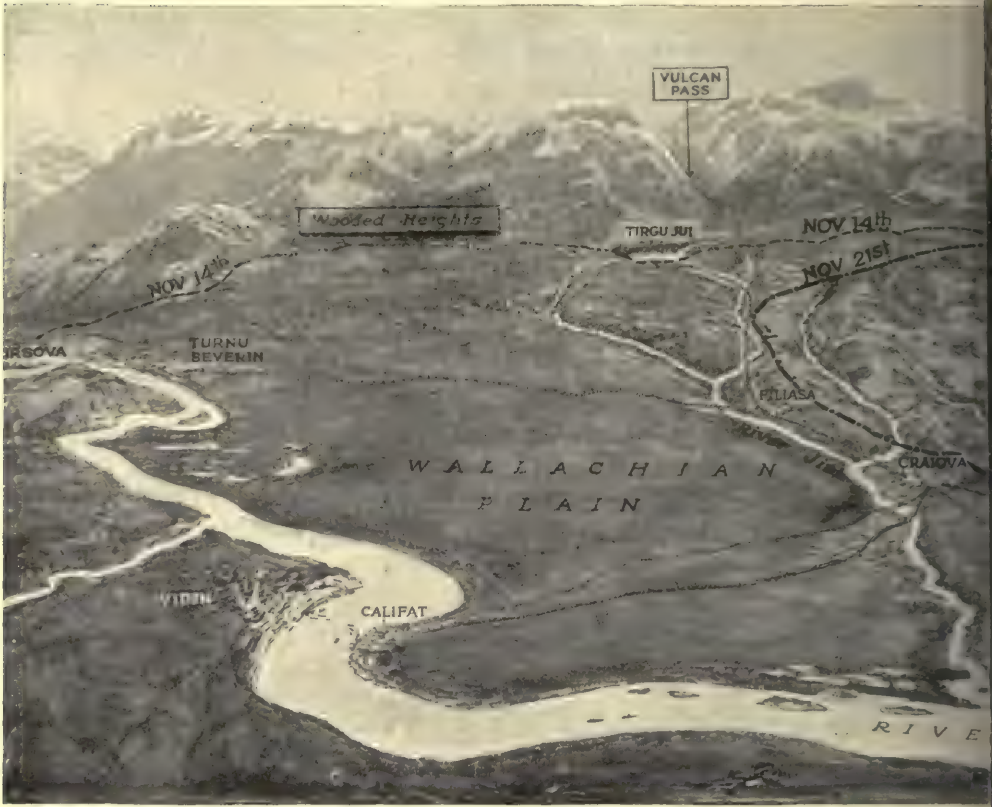
I have now told you how our Allies were forced out of that part of Rumania which lies to the south and east of the Danube, and how the Bulgarians recovered all and more than all the territory which they lost in 1913. It is a sad story, but you have yet to read a sadder. I must now tell you how the Rumanians were driven out of Transylvania, and harried right across their land to make a last stand in Moldavia. By the time you have read the next few pages you will come to the conclusion that the Rumanians had to pay a very heavy price indeed for the blunder with which they started the campaign. Their eagerness to possess the Promised Land forced them to divide their forces and to fight on two fronts. This great disadvantage, coupled with their grievous lack of munitions and the weakness of their generals, led to their undoing.

On page 167 I told you that by the end of September 1916 the Rumanians had won one-third of all Transylvania. They made such rapid progress because they were only opposed by weak forces. Before long, however, Austro-German reinforcements were brought up, and von Falkenhayn took command.

He speedily turned his attention to the two Rumanian columns which were fighting in the Vulcan Pass and in the Red Tower Pass, forty miles to the east (see diagram, pp. 172–173). He divided his forces into three parts. The first part he thrust against the Rumanians who had emerged from the Vulcan Pass; with the second he attacked those who had issued from the Red Tower Pass; and the third he kept in hand for an encircling movement.

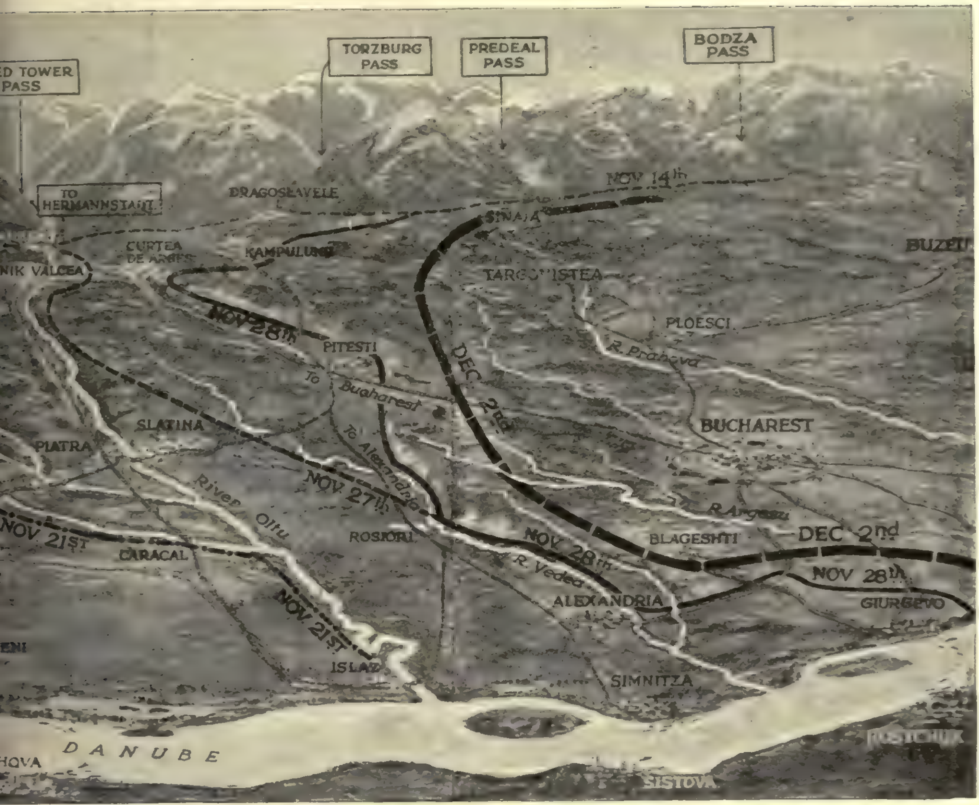
He first pushed the Rumanians back upon the Vulcan Pass, and held them there. Then, by means of the excellent system of frontier railways, he carried his reserve to Hermannstadt, and reinforced the body which was driving the Rumanian forces back upon the Red Tower Pass. This pass, you will remember, is simply a gorge in the mountains through which flows the river Aluta. On the right or western bank of the river there is a narrow road shut in by the high walls of the mountains. The Rumanians were forced back into the pass, and while the long line of men and guns and transport was retreat-



The Retreat across Wallachia—

ing along this road, Falkenhayn sent a column of Bavarians right across the mountains on his right. They followed the mountain tracks, climbed a height of 2,500 feet above the valley floor, and, after a march of twenty-five or thirty miles, dropped down upon the road, thus taking the retreating Rumanians in flank. You can scarcely imagine a more perilous position for an army. It was cooped up in a narrow gorge, and the only road of escape lay across the river and up the mountain slopes on the other side. The Rumanians were trapped, and it seemed that nothing could save them. The Germans afterwards said that they had caught them in a ring of iron. Nevertheless the bulk of them managed to cross the river and get away, but they were obliged to leave behind them 3,000 prisoners and 500 wagons.

Falkenhayn had won an important victory. He told his



rom the Carpathians to Bucharest.

rmy that the enemy was as good as annihilated, and that the emnants which were wandering about the mountains could 10 longer be called troops. "Forward," he cried, "to new leeds and new victories!" He followed up this success by apidly moving his forces by railway from one point to another long the edge of the mountains, and thus was able to strike vith superior numbers at the Rumanians who were holding the nouths of the passes.

By the end of October he had penned them in the passes. Then, leaving sufficient forces to hold them, he gathered together a large body of troops along the southern face of the Carpathians for an invasion of Wallachia. For three weeks here was fierce fighting amidst the foothills, and slowly but urely he advanced towards the open plain. He had only one real set-back during this part of the campaign. A Bavarian column which had rashly advanced down the Vulcan Pass was caught by the 1st Rumanian Army, and was so badly beaten that it was forced to retire, leaving behind it 1,500 killed and wounded, the same number of prisoners, and two batteries of howitzers.

Elsewhere, however, the invaders gained ground almost daily, and by 28th October they were fighting their way down the Predeal Pass.

The Rumanian defence now slackened suddenly. Shells and cartridges had given out, and all along the line the Rumanians fell back with great speed. By 14th November von Falkenhayn had left the mountains behind him, and was pushing across Wallachia.

A week later he was across the river Jiul, and the important grain centre of Craiova was in his hands. He was now in possession of good railway communications, and his advance was very rapid. The 27th of November saw him well over the Aluta (Oltu), but still the Rumanians made no attempt to stay him. Next day he was astride the railway from Pitesti to Bucharest. On the river Arges (Argesu) the Rumanians attempted to make a stand. They were badly beaten, and so rapidly did they retreat that they had no time to destroy the bridges. Falkenhayn followed up the flying foe, and during the five days of fighting he claimed to have captured 21,000 prisoners and many guns. By 2nd December he was lying in a half-circle to the north-west, and south of Bucharest. By this time the Russians were making a counter-offensive in the Eastern Carpathians and the defiles of Moldavia, but it had little or no effect upon Falkenhayn's advance.

Bucharest, the gay capital, with its fine buildings, attractive boulevards, and beautiful gardens, was now doomed, and on Saturday, December 1, the seat of the Government was moved to Jassy, the university town of Moldavia, on the Sereth. The Rumanians removed the guns from the ring of forts, and did not attempt to defend the city. Thousands of the inhabitants, who remembered the horrors suffered by the Belgians, decided to seek refuge in Moldavia. There was a terrible rush for the trains, and people were knocked down and trampled under foot. The roads were black with motor cars and long lines of townsfolk carrying in carts or on their backs such household possessions as they could save. The great Belgian exodus, which

Rumanian Heroism: Swimming the Danube to save the Colours.

(*By permission of The Illustrated London News.*)

On the evening of September 6, 1916, when the Rumanians were defeated at Turtukai (see p. 167), three soldiers managed to swim the Danube and save the colours of their regiment. One of them, carrying the colours, got astride a tree-trunk; and the others, amidst a hail of bullets, swam and pushed the precious freight before them. Though the river is at this point a quarter of a mile wide and the current is very rapid, the men reached the northern bank safely.

I described in the last chapter of Vol. II. was enacted all over again.

On 6th December the Germans entered Bucharest, and Ploesti, the great oil centre, fell. Later in the month we learned that the Royal Palace and the museums at Bucharest had been ruthlessly pillaged. We also heard with satisfaction that a British contingent with armoured motor cars had fired the oil wells, and had destroyed the machinery, so that the Germans would not be able to profit by their capture for a long time to come. This was good news, but it was balanced by a misfortune. The Rumanians had left a rearguard to hold Orsova ; the Germans had forced it into an engagement, and 8,000 men had surrendered.

* * * * * * *

With the capture of Bucharest—the fourth capital to fall into the enemy's hands—I must close this account of Rumania's ill-starred campaign. In a later chapter I shall tell you how the land was overrun and the Rumanians were driven back until they had only a narrow strip of country which they could call their own. The defeat of the Rumanians was distressing, and the overrunning of the land was a calamity ; but it did not spell victory for the Germans. Even while they were boasting of their victories, the Kaiser, as you will learn later, was forced to offer peace to the Allies.

He had hoped much from his conquest of Rumania. In Germany and Austria the pinch of hunger was being severely felt, and bread riots were common in the towns. Only from Rumania could additional foodstuffs be procured to tide over the long, hungry months of winter.

As the German legions rolled on across Rumania, and the great wheat centres were captured one by one, the hungry Germans and Austrians were cheered with the promise of bread in plenty. But they were soon to be disappointed. The Rumanians shipped off as much grain as they could to Russia, and destroyed a great deal of the rest. Even supposing that 3,000,000 tons remained, it would not suffice to give the Germans and Austrians more than the ordinary peace supply for three weeks. It is said that, when guns captured from the Rumanians were exhibited in Berlin, one hungry citizen wrote on a limber, " Yes, but we have no butter ! "

CHAPTER XVII.

BRINGING DOWN THE ZEPPELINS.—I.

IN Chapter XXIV. of our fifth volume I brought my account of German air raids on Great Britain down to the end of June 1916. By that time, you will remember, our air defences were improving. Searchlights and anti-aircraft guns had been installed at all the points of greatest danger, and we had discovered that the most deadly enemy of the Zeppelin is the aeroplane, because it can travel much faster than an airship, it can climb much higher, and it offers a very small target to the guns of the raiders. The great difficulty and danger of aeroplane-flying by night were being gradually overcome.

There is an old saying that every bane has its antidote. The Zeppelins undoubtedly were a very great bane. In the first half of the year 1916 there had been six raids, during which 157 persons had been killed and 354 injured, much property had been destroyed, and our munition workers had been forced to lose many hours of labour. But all the while busy brains were at work, and devices were being invented which made the bringing down of Zeppelins almost certain, once our aeroplanes could get within reach of them. By the month of September the antidote had been discovered, and the bane was no longer a terror.

Even in the days when the monsters were doing their worst there was no great panic in the country. Our people were never really terrified, and the German "frightfulness" only served to harden the national resolve to fight the war to a finish. When raids took place, the great difficulty always was to keep the people within doors. Thousands rushed into the streets, eagerly desirous of getting a glimpse of the murderous visitants. Even children clamoured to be allowed "to see the Zepps." It is said that in a large orphanage around which bombs had fallen on several occasions, the children used to promise their dolls that if they were very good "they might sit up and see the Zeppelins come." Children and adults alike regarded the airships with far more curiosity than fear.

In the later raids which I am about to describe two types of airship were used—the improved or super-Zeppelin and the Schülte-Lanz.* The improved Zeppelin was about 680 feet long—that is, about 110 feet less in length than the *Lusitania*, or 70 feet longer than the *Campania*. In its thickest part it was 72 feet across. Its framework consisted of a very light and strong alloy of aluminium, and inside the envelope there were twenty-four separate chambers, containing in all some 2,000,000 feet of hydrogen gas. The total weight of the ship, including her crew, was about fifty tons. Six petrol engines drove the propellers, and the armament consisted of several machine guns, and sometimes two or three light guns which fired shells. The usual number of bombs carried was sixty.

Underneath the airship, and built into its framework, were four gondolas. In a cabin of the foremost gondola sat the captain, surrounded by wheels and levers, which enabled him to guide and control the ship. By means of an electrical device he could drop his sixty bombs at will. Behind him in another cabin, cased with cotton wool to deaden the sound of the engines, was the wireless operator. The same gondola contained an engine.

A "cat-walk" inside the keel of the ship enabled the crew to pass from the foremost gondola to the two central gondolas, and also to the rear gondola. In each of these gondolas there were engines and guns. On the top of the envelope other guns were placed. Each Zeppelin of this type carried about 2,000 gallons of petrol and a crew of twenty-two, including the officers. It had a speed of from fifty-five to sixty miles per hour. An airship of this type could be built in about a year, at a cost of between a quarter and a half million of money.

The Schülte-Lanz airship was shorter than the Zeppelin. It was about 500 feet long, and had three gondolas, and a little cabin for the navigator forward. Its frame was made not of aluminium but of wood wound round with wire.

Between 1st July and the end of November German air-

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* So called from the names of its two German inventors.

Lieutenant William Leefe Robinson, V.C.

Born 1895. The first airman to bring down an airship on British soil.

ships raided England no less than ten times. In addition there were three aeroplane raids. Never before had the Germans shown such activity in "frightfulness." They were being terribly pressed on the Somme, and they hoped that blows at England's heart would weaken her resolution, or at least hamper her production of munitions. July was nine days old when an enemy seaplane visited the Isle of Thanet. Its stay was brief indeed. Our airmen went up in pursuit, and it flew off with such haste that it had no time to drop its bombs. A second seaplane appeared over south-east Kent, and was more successful. It dropped seven bombs, broke a number of windows, but did no other damage. Nevertheless the Germans announced that they had bombarded Harwich and Dover. They had never been near Harwich at all.

The beautiful summer weather of late July and early August tempted them to make a series of raids on the eastern and south-eastern counties, and on the Thames valley. During these raids, which I shall describe separately, large numbers of fire-raising bombs were dropped in the hope of setting alight the ripening corn. No important damage, however, was done.

On the night of 28th–29th July, when a heavy fog hung over the coast, enemy airships appeared over Norfolk, Lincolnshire, and Yorkshire. The pilots lost their way, but they reported that they had destroyed a lighthouse at the mouth of the Humber, and had bombed Lincoln, Norwich, Grimsby, and Birmingham. As a matter of fact, most of their bombs either fell into the sea or upon open fields, where they did but trifling damage. In Lincolnshire the casualties were one calf, one rabbit, and five thrushes. A haystack was fired, and two bombs fell near a railway, but the rest came to earth where they could do no harm to anybody. The raiders were fired at when they approached certain important points, but they escaped without damage.

On 31st July they returned, and swept over the Thames estuary, Kent, Lincoln, Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridge, Essex, and Huntingdon. They crossed the coast at ten in the evening, and arrived under cover of a thin mist. They were shelled by our ships and by our land guns; but again they escaped, though one of them was believed to be hit. One of our aeroplanes chased a Zeppelin, and attacked it when about thirty miles off the East Coast. The aviator fired his machine gun at it until a portion of his weapon flew off and stunned him. When he regained consciousness the Zeppelin was nowhere to be seen.

On 3rd August a fleet of Zeppelins attacked trawlers in the North Sea, and shortly after ten at night crossed the coast and sailed over Norfolk, Suffolk, and Essex. They made no attempt to go far inland, but were content to drop their bombs along the shore. So ineffective was this raid that the pilots must have lost their bearings. Though the airships flew very high, so as to be out of range of the " Archies," our gunners firmly believed that they had hit one of them. It appeared to be crippled, and made off eastward.

Much more serious was the raid on 9th August, when a number of airships, either singly or in pairs, boldly swept over the south-east of Scotland and the north-east and east coasts of England. Not much damage was done in Scotland, where the fog was thick, and the guns of several towns of the north-east coast drove the raiders off. One of the Zeppelins, however, dropped bombs on a residential district in the north-east of England and damaged a good deal of private property, besides killing seven people and injuring a number of others. Three persons died of shock.

Again the Germans reported that they had wreaked awful havoc upon us. " Powerful explosions," they said, " were observed at the ironworks and benzol factories in Middlesborough, and large fires were seen in the harbour establishments of Hull and Hartlepool. The good effects of the explosions were also observed in yards on the Tyne, and fires were caused in the industrial establishments at Whitby. Strong effects were seen at the railway establishments of King's Lynn." Those who compiled this report were masters of fiction ; the whole story was " a perversion of the truth."

Moonless nights set in again towards the end of August, and on the 24th six Zeppelins raided the east and south coasts of England. Two seaside towns, one on the east coast and the other on the south coast, were attacked ; but in both cases the airships were driven off by gunfire. One of the Zeppelins managed to reach the outskirts of London, where it killed a number of persons and did considerable damage to property. There were several very narrow escapes. For example, a carter with a van drawn by two horses had pulled up at a coffee-stall. A bomb fell as he was talking to the coffee-stall keeper ; it killed the horses, but only slightly injured the two men. Another bomb fell behind a group of almshouses in which about eighty old people were living. Though every window was broken, no one was hurt. In one small house on which a bomb fell, a man, his wife, and their baby girl were killed, and another child was injured. Elsewhere a house was wrecked, and another man, his wife, and daughter were killed. It was announced that eight persons had lost their lives, and twenty-two had been injured ; but later on this number was found to be understated.

The four raids which I have just described proved that we were not yet in possession of a satisfactory method of dealing with the raiders. On four occasions they had made extensive raids, and had returned in safety. It is true that they had been assailed by our guns, and had been forced to fly at such heights that their bomb-dropping was at random. Nevertheless, we could not consider ourselves in command of our own air until we were able to destroy one or more of the raiders every time they ventured over our territory. By this time, however, a new method had been devised, and you are now to hear how it met with success.

On the evening of Saturday, 2nd September, the most formidable raid that had so far been attempted took place. Thirteen airships crossed the North Sea, and passed over the Eastern Counties *en route* for the Midlands and London. Stricter orders as to the screening of lights had come into force, and for the most part the raiders saw nothing to guide them. They therefore had to grope about to find their way. Some of the Zeppelins wandered over East Anglia, dropping their bombs blindly, and doing little or no damage. Three of them reached the outskirts of London, where searchlights were busy sweeping the sky in all directions. The night was densely black ; there was no wind or rain ; the air was still, and only a few stars were showing. London was in almost complete darkness ; yet thousands of persons clambered on to the roofs of their houses in the hope of seeing the raiders. They were rewarded with the sight of a lifetime.

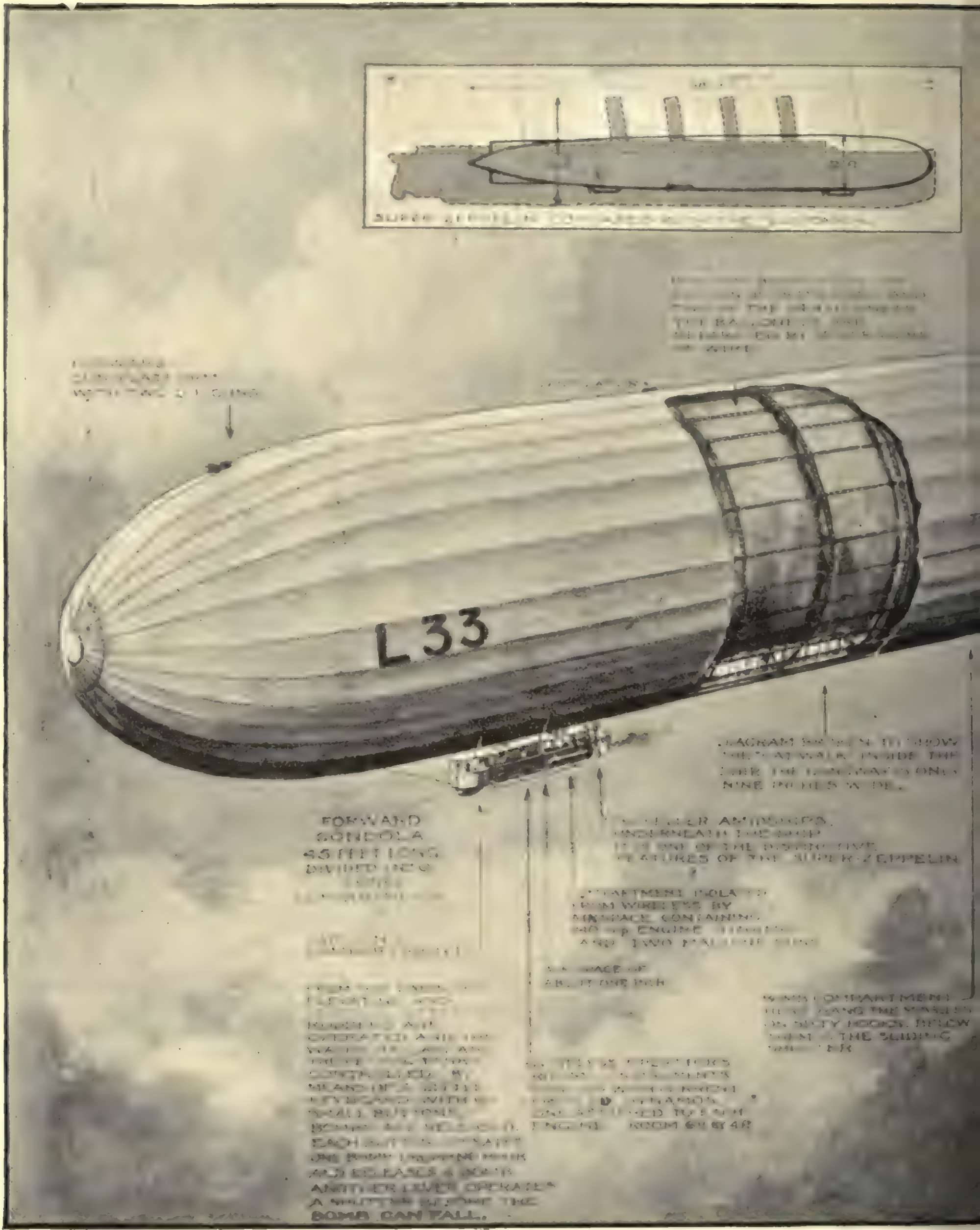
Suddenly the silence of the night was broken by the sound of distant guns and of bursting bombs. The searchlights—scores of them—swung their long fingers to the north-east, and revealed an airship moving slowly. A correspondent thus described the scene :—

> " We were watching the flickering play of the searchlights—more searchlights than I have ever seen before. Then there droned out of the silence a sound which grew. It was like—I don't know ; yes, it was like a traction engine roaring in the sky. Next there was a gleam of silver-blue in the middle of one of the lights, and before you could think the wheeling lights settled on it in a ring. Clear and distinct, I could see every stay, every line. There stood out a toy Zeppelin, delicate in the white light as a fantasy. It hung motionless, it seemed to me, for quite a time ; but perhaps it was under a second, for time stood still.
>
> " The silence broke with the crash of a gun and the scream of a shell from somewhere behind me, and as my eye trailed the red spark which soared skywards there were streams of red sparks ending in golden rain that quickly died, and a muttering rumble from the sky which might have been an echo from the guns, but which, I suppose, was the sound of the shell-bursts running into one another.
>
> " The effect on the Zeppelin was weird. It twisted, and doubled, and turned, and darted, rose and fell, and squirmed like a live hunted thing in the skies, swimming in the centre of a pool of blinding white light, plastered with sullen points of dead glowing red. One had hardly time to do more than feel when, *pouff !* the pool of white light had gone. The guns fell suddenly silent. Strained eyes gazed and blinked again at blackness ; strained ears caught the hissing intake of one's own and one's neighbour's breath. The pause, the hush, was appalling."

What was happening ? We know now ; but the men who stood gazing into the darkness could only guess. Our aeroplanes had gone up, and were now within reach of the monster. One of the aviators, Lieutenant William Leefe Robinson, of the Royal Flying Corps, had engaged her in a deadly duel. A brother officer thus describes what followed :—

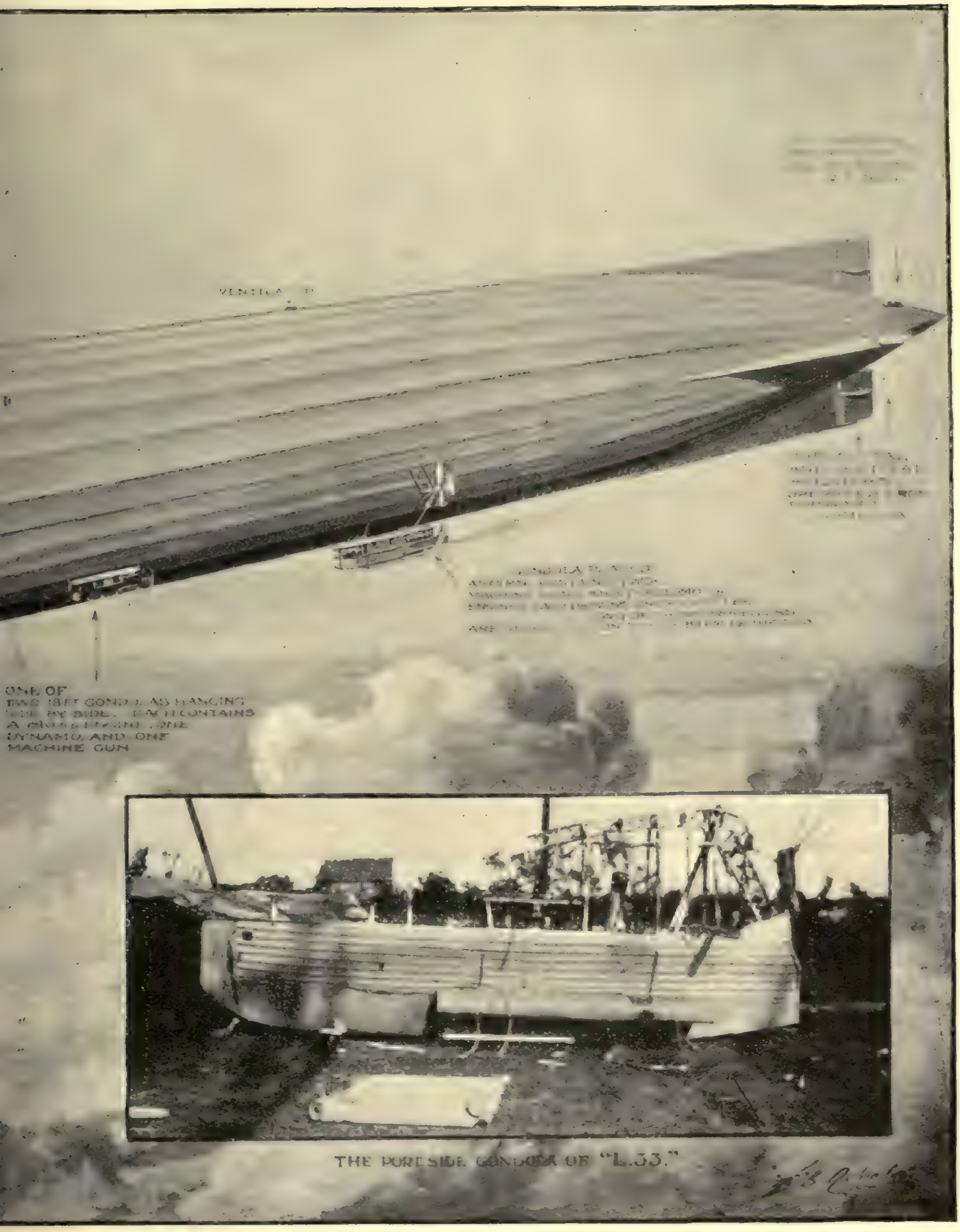
> " Robinson, on a high-power biplane, had reached an altitude of nearly 10,000 feet before he was able to engage the raider. Two other aeroplanes were at that time trying to get within reach of her, and she was making frantic efforts to get away, at the same time firing her machine guns. The airship was travelling at top speed, first diving and then ascending, and apparently Robinson foresaw what she was about to do. The commander of the airship threw out tremendous black clouds of smoke which completely hid him from our view, and in which he managed to rise. A few seconds later we could see the airship a couple of thousand feet above us, and at the same altitude was Lieutenant Robinson, although a matter of perhaps half a mile away. Immediately Robinson headed his machine for the raider, and, flying at a terrible speed, seemed to charge the monster."

Spectators on the ground suddenly saw a blinding glare as the hydrogen in the airship burst into flames. A huge sheet



A German Super-Zeppelin,

The super-Zeppelin L33, one of the two Zeppelins brought down on the night of September 23rd, essential parts of the ship remained, and our experts were able to discover all its secrets. The above parative size of the *Lusitania* and the L33. The lower inset illustration shows the airship's port-side


ONE OF
TWO 18FT GONDOLAS HANGING
SIDE BY SIDE. EACH CONTAINS
A [illegible] ENGINE, ONE
DYNAMO, AND ONE
MACHINE GUN
THE PORTSIDE GONDOLA OF "L.33."

showing Details of Construction. [*By permission of The Illustrated London News.*

1916, was forced to alight in Essex. Though the outer fabric and the gas bags were destroyed, the llustration shows the main features of her structure. The smaller diagram at the top shows the com- gondola. The drawings were made by W. B. Robinson from published details and photographs.

of fire arose, and lit up the countryside for miles around. The white-hot monster began to sink, slowly at first, then swifter and swifter, and as it fell like a huge fiery parachute a loud roar of cheering rose from a hundred thousand throats. By the time the destroyed airship was within a thousand feet of the earth, all the gas had apparently been burnt up, and only the solid framework and the gondolas containing the wrecked engines and the scorched and lifeless bodies of the crew reached the ground. The first raiding airship to fall on British soil had been brought down.

It fell in a field in the neighbourhood of Cuffley, a hamlet near Enfield, to the north of London. Next day thousands of Londoners in every kind of vehicle went out to view the wreckage. They found that the Zeppelin was represented only by a tangled mass of wire, a few remnants of what had been the envelope, and several lorry loads of engine parts and miscellaneous metal—all looking as though they had been recovered from a burning building. An examination of the wreckage revealed the fact that the airship was of the Schülte-Lanz type, and that it was marked L21. Under a tarpaulin lay the charred remains of the crew.

It was not until the following Tuesday that the public knew how and by whom the airship had been destroyed. The newspaper announcement informed us that the King had bestowed a Victoria Cross on LIEUTENANT WILLIAM LEEFE ROBINSON. "He attacked an enemy airship," ran the official record, "under circumstances of great difficulty and danger, and sent it crashing to the ground as a flaming wreck. He had been in the air for more than two hours, and had previously attacked another airship during his flight."

I am sure that you will wish to hear something more of Lieutenant Robinson, who at once became a national hero. He was born in India in the year 1895, and was twenty-one years of age when he performed the feat which won him the highest award of valour. Educated at St. Bees School, Cumberland, he entered Sandhurst in August 1914, and in the following December was gazetted to the Worcestershire Regiment, with which he served until March 1915, when he joined the Royal Flying Corps as an observer. He was wounded in the left arm by shrapnel on 9th May, and after his recovery "won his wings." His own modest account of the fight is as follows :—

> "I had been up something over an hour when I saw the first Zeppelin. She was flying high, and I followed her, climbing to get a position above. But there was a heavy fog, and she escaped me. I attacked her at long range; but she made off before I could see if I had done any damage. The next ship I saw I determined I would attack from the first position I found. I met her just after two o'clock. She was flying at 10,000 feet. Soon she appeared to catch fire in her forward petrol tank. The flames spread rapidly along her body. She made off eastward, on fire. In several minutes she dipped by the nose and dived slowly in flames to the earth. I was so pleased that in my excitement I pulled the 'joy stick,' and looped the loop several times. Then I showed my signal to stop firing. and came back."

About the middle of the month the hero received several handsome cheques which had been offered by private persons as a reward to the first man who brought down a Zeppelin raider on British soil.

The bodies of the commander (Captain Wilhelm Schramm) and the fifteen members of the crew of the destroyed airship were buried by the Royal Flying Corps with military honours. Many people thought that no honours ought to be paid to the remains of those who had been simply "baby-killers;" but the men of the Flying Service held that the Germans had simply obeyed orders, and that they had died as soldiers doing their duty. Six officers of the Royal Flying Corps with bared heads carried the body of the commander to the grave, and parties of men performed the same office for the members of the crew. A simple funeral service was held, and at the end of it the "Last Post" was sounded.

It will interest you to learn that the field in which L21 fell and burnt itself out was afterwards presented by its owner to the nation on condition that a monument commemorating Lieutenant Robinson's deed would be erected therein. A relic from one of the airships which managed to escape was afterwards picked up in East Anglia. It was an aluminium car, in which an observer could be lowered for a considerable distance from the Zeppelin, so as to view the earth beneath and telephone the result of his observations to the captain above.

The number of casualties resulting from this raid of thirteen airships was surprisingly small: one man and one woman were reported as killed, and eleven adults and two children as injured.

On the night of 23rd September twelve airships made another attempt. This time they crossed the east and south-east coasts. As soon as they appeared they were received with what they afterwards described as " extraordinarily heavy fire." Some of the airships made for Lincolnshire and the Eastern Counties ; two steered for London and approached the city, the one from the south-east and the other from the east. Aeroplanes at once went up, and the guns opened fire, with the result that the raiders were driven off; not, however, before they had killed in the London area seventeen men, eight women, and three children, and injured ninety-nine others.

Twelve airships left Germany on this raid, but only ten returned. One of them was so damaged by gunfire that it had to descend in Essex. It made no headlong fall, but came down gracefully under full control, and lay stretched across two large fields and a narrow by-road. Shortly after it fell the whole crew suddenly alighted, and retreated for a short distance. Then a loud explosion was heard, and flames sprang up from the stranded Zeppelin. They had blown it up. The fire blazed for more than an hour, until nothing but the aluminium shell remained.

Meanwhile the crew, headed by the commander, marched up to a labourer's cottage, and gave a rat-tat-tat at the door. The occupants made no reply, and did not open the door to their strange visitants from the sky. The Germans then marched along the road to find some one to whom they could surrender.

A special constable thus tells the story :—

" My wife and I heard the humming of the Zeppelin's engines. It seemed to be coming from London, and presently, while I was dressing, it appeared to be describing a large circle around this district. For a while I stood in my garden, listening and looking for it. Suddenly the sound of its engines ceased, and a few minutes afterwards there was a loud explosion within a mile of my house.

" A neighbour agreed to stay with my wife while I went to see what had happened, and I set out along the road. About half-way there I met about twenty men walking along towards me. They were mostly well-built young fellows, probably not much more than twenty years old. They wore a uniform not unlike that of a fireman, except that they wore no helmets ; some of them had no headgear at all.

" Naturally I stopped as they came up. One of them, who turned out to be the commander, asked me in very good English how far it was to ——. I told him six miles, and they made to go on. I joined them.

" They were talking in German. Only one of them besides the commander seemed to know any English, and he could only speak it brokenly.

'Zeppelin,' he said; 'we crew—prisoners of war.' I gathered that they wished to surrender, so I kept with them until we met two or three other special constables, and they joined the party.

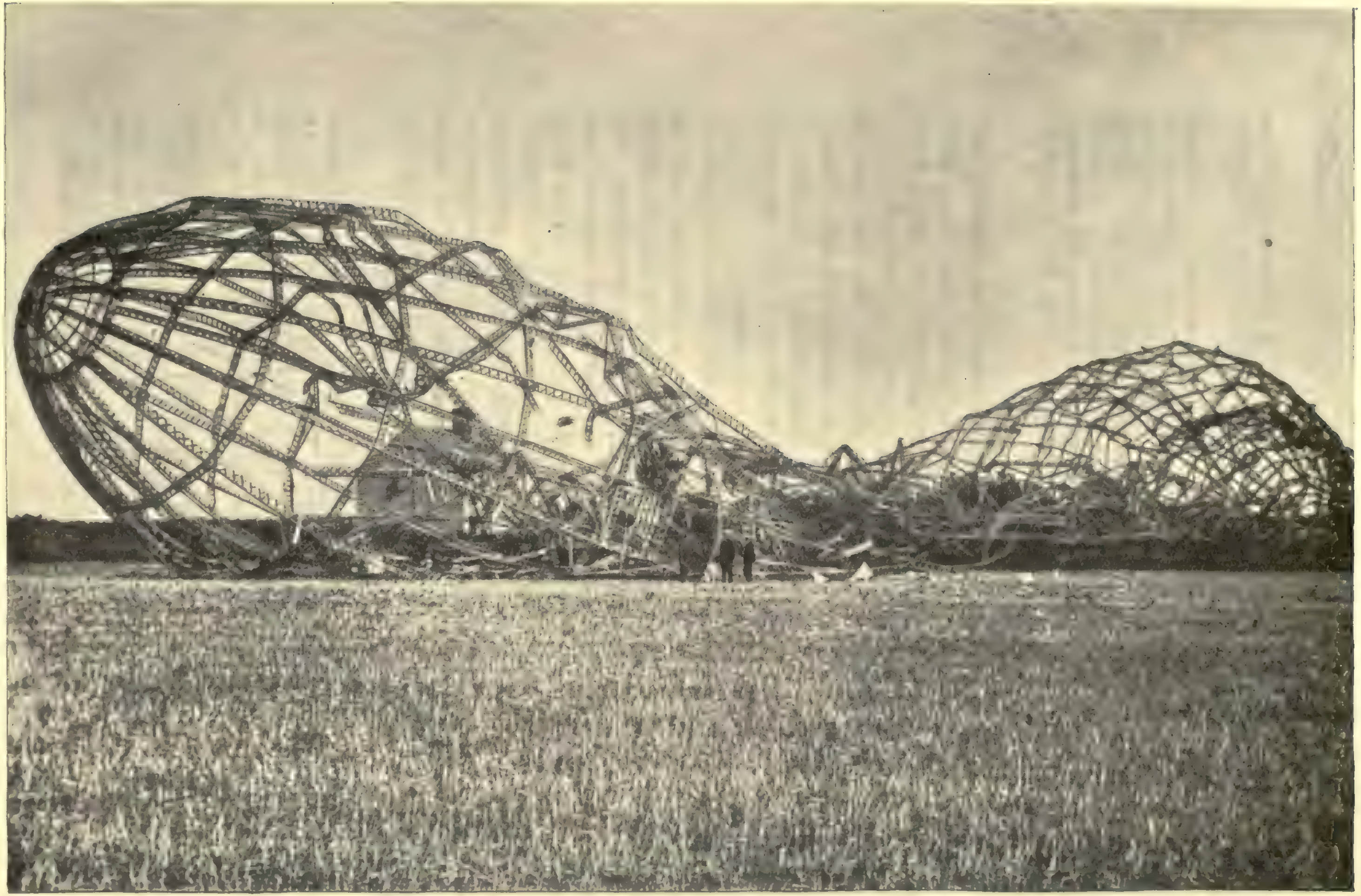
"Soon we reached the post office of my village, and sent a telephone message for a military escort. Then we went on with the prisoners until we met the escort, and handed them over to the custody of the troops. I, of course, was unarmed, and so, I believe, were the Germans. In the darkness one of them pushed into my hand what he said was a revolver, but it proved to be only a hammer. So far as I could see, the prisoners seemed thoroughly glad to be on firm ground, and only too anxious to be placed in the hands of the military."

The explosion had only partially destroyed the airship, and enough of it remained to enable our airmen to gain those particulars about the newest type of super-Zeppelin which I gave you on page 178. Those who visited the scene were amazed at the huge size of the ship, and one who went into the interior said that it was like being in the inside of the Crystal Palace. The whole structure seemed to be wonderfully light, and it is said that ten or twelve feet of the framework could be raised and held up easily with the little finger. It proved to be L33, one of the largest and most recently built airships in the German service. Before dawn thousands of eager persons had arrived from London in every kind of vehicle to view the mangled airship. They found, however, a ring of troops round the raider, and all that they could see was a trail of twisted aluminium struts lying by a thorn hedge, and a great scrap heap of the framework piled against the tree into which the Zeppelin had dived. A correspondent said that the heap resembled nothing so much as a box of meccano pieces, hurriedly upset.

L33 was not the only Zeppelin that came down that night in Essex. A Dutch editor, who was visiting Great Britain at the time, wrote the following account of what he saw:—

"I happened to visit on Saturday night a town in the county of Essex. The place was so dark that I could hardly find my way to the hotel. An enemy airship could distinguish absolutely nothing there from a safe height. There were rumours of Zeppelins having reached the English coast. At midnight people were still standing in the streets, 'to enjoy the fun,' as I heard some say.

"As nothing seemed to happen within sight, I went to bed shortly before 1 a.m. Hardly had I undressed when I heard gunfire in the distance and people rushing out of doors. I dressed hurriedly, went out, and heard people near the water's edge shout, 'There she is!' Less than twenty miles away a German airship was seen lighted up by the rays of many searchlights. Shells were bursting underneath the airship so closely



The Airship that came down "somewhere" in Essex. [*By permission of The Sphere.*

This picture shows you all that remained of L33 when it had burnt itself out. The crew, forced to descend, blew up the vessel and then knocked at the door of the cottage which you see in the picture. Receiving no answer, they wandered along country lanes, and fell in with a special constable, who handed them over to the military as prisoners.

that the people became excited. 'They'll get her!' said some. Suddenly a flame shot up above the airship. For a moment everybody was silent in eager expectation. Then a thunderous shout rent the air: 'Hurrah! She's on fire!' And, as if one could not clearly see it, many people shouted excitedly, 'Look! look! Now she is burning!'

"And burn she did. The whole monster was a huge mass of glowing fire. Then, after a few seconds, we saw her fall right over and drop like the burning stick of a huge rocket. Very slowly the fiery column sank towards the earth, and the slowness of its fall raised the people to a high pitch of enthusiasm. I never saw or heard anything like it. The big crowd shouted, danced, waved hats and caps, and clapped hands, while many steamers on the river blew their sirens. The dropping of the burning Zeppelin lasted a couple of minutes. At last the fiery mass reached the ground. Then the cheers were deafening.

"Less than half an hour later the place was silent. People went home quietly to bed. The baby-killers had received another warm lesson."

Not until the month of October did the nation learn the name of the airman who had repeated Lieutenant Robinson's feat. He proved to be *Second-Lieutenant F. Sowrey*, an intimate friend of Robinson's. He was studying at King's College, London, for the Indian Civil Service when the war broke out; but at once joined up, and was given a commission in the Royal Fusiliers. He was wounded at Loos, and afterwards at Ypres. In January 1916 he joined the Royal Flying Corps, and in the following June took his pilot's certificate. On the night of the raid which I have just described he ascended with Lieutenant Robinson and Second-Lieutenant Alfred de Bath Brandon, of whom you will hear later. At a high altitude, however, they became separated. As soon as he sighted the Zeppelin he climbed still higher and attacked it. The Zeppelin opened fire, and aeroplane and airship fought a duel while both manœuvred for position. At last Lieutenant Sowrey gained the upper position, and soon afterwards hurled his fatal shaft.

The delight of the nation at the destruction of two more raiders was clouded by the knowledge that 30 persons had been killed and 110 injured in London and the Eastern Counties. Some very fine acts of quiet heroism were done while the bombs were falling. I have only space to tell you of one of them. A girl of thirteen, named Violet Buckthorpe, was sitting up with two other children and her grandfather and grandmother, waiting for her parents to come home, when a bomb burst in the road outside the house. The children were sitting at a table playing at " school " when the whole of the window was blown over their heads against the opposite wall. How they escaped remains a mystery.

The room was strewn with fallen bricks and mortar, and outside the stairs, both to the bedroom above and to the street below, were rocking as though they would give way at any moment. At once Violet thought of her baby sister in the room above. Without a moment's hesitation she scrambled up the insecure stairs, some of which had disappeared, leaving wide gaps. She found the little child in bed covered by debris from the fallen ceiling. Picking up the baby and clutching it tightly with both arms, she made her way down the broken stairway, jumping over the gaps where they were not too wide, and in other places helping herself down by means of the shaking banister. Thus she reached the street, and, finding no help at hand, knelt on the pavement with the baby in her arms and prayed. In this position she was found by a special constable, who placed her in the shelter of a doorway. The little girl, however, thought that the baby was wounded ; so she took off her dress, wrapped it round the child, and hurried off to the hospital, where to her joy she discovered that her precious sister was unhurt. She herself was wounded in the head.

You will be glad to know that Violet's splendid devotion to the baby did not go unrecognized. The Carnegie Hero Trust Fund awarded her a gold watch, which was presented to her in the Mansion House by the Lord Mayor of London.

CHAPTER XVIII.

BRINGING DOWN THE ZEPPELINS.—II.

ON the following Monday night (25th September) seven airships made a raid upon industrial districts in the north. Some of the Zeppelins which approached important centres were driven off by gunfire ; but in the North Midlands many small houses and cottages were wrecked, and the casualties were reported to be thirty-six killed and twenty-seven injured. The Germans claimed that they had bombarded Portsmouth, fortified towns at the mouth of the Thames, and places of military importance in Central England ; also York, Leeds, Lincoln, and Derby.

The next raid, which took place on 1st October, was intended to be the most terrible of all. It was chiefly directed against London. Ten Zeppelins crossed the coast between 9 p.m. and midnight, and two of them steered for the great city, while the rest wandered aimlessly over the Eastern Counties and Lincolnshire, dropping bombs, which fell for the most part in the open country and did little damage. The raiders which had made London their objective met with a very warm reception indeed. About 10 p.m. an airship was seen approaching the capital. A correspondent who viewed the raider from the veranda of his house, which was just outside the fringe of the searchlights guarding the London area, tells us that about 10.30 he heard the beat of her engines.

> "Meanwhile my children—two girls, aged eight and eleven—insisted on dressing ; they wanted to 'see the show.' With their mother they made themselves comfortable on the veranda. About half-past eleven, away to the south-east, we saw flashes from falling bombs and the bursting of shrapnel, and heard the boom of heavy guns firing. The children were getting very interested. Suddenly a score of searchlights seemed to concentrate at one point, and quite distinctly we saw the Zeppelin 'held.'

> Shrapnel was bursting all around her. Then the guns ceased, and we could see no Zeppelin. We thought she had managed to slip away. But almost immediately there appeared in the sky a yellow light ; it became larger and larger, until we realized that it was the Zeppelin on fire. From yellow the flames changed to ruby ; they seemed to spread from the centre to each end of the airship. When she was aglow from end to end she tilted, gradually became perpendicular, and fell slowly to earth.
>
> "The flames lit up the country for miles ; the framework of the machine was plainly visible. You could see smaller portions of her ribs loosened by the heat falling like small sparks. She fell five miles from my house ; I thought I heard the whole of England cheering."

The airship fell at Potter's Bar, and its flaming descent was witnessed by millions of people, who now felt that the Zeppelin terror was at an end. As it rushed towards earth the main gondola broke away, and the wretched crew were either thrown out or leaped out to their swift and horrible destruction. While the great mass of wreckage lay on the ground crowds assembled and sang " God save the King."

Later on it was discovered that the commander of the destroyed airship was Captain Mathy, the best known of all the Zeppelin pilots. He had taken part in every previous raid, and he had laughed to scorn the idea that a single aeroplane could bring about the doom of an airship. Yet one solitary machine was the instrument of his undoing. When the news reached Germany it caused " the most painful surprise," and men marvelled at the new methods of air defence which the British had discovered. In America it was freely said that the Zeppelin was an exploded weapon of war.

The Germans had not yet arrived at this conclusion. For years they had been taught that Count Zeppelin's invention would assuredly bring Britain to her knees, and they believed in their airships with an almost religious faith. After every raid they were told wondrous tales of the awful havoc that had been wreaked on hated England, and many of the people believed that London, Liverpool, and other great cities were heaps of ruin, and that most Britons were living, terror-stricken, in deep dug-outs. Now they discovered to their dismay that in two raids no fewer than three of their cherished airships had been destroyed—the biters had been bitten, and the engineers hoist with their own petards. Before, however, they discarded their faith in the huge gas bags they meant to make another determined effort.

A Burning Zeppelin.

(*By permission of The Sphere.*)

A correspondent tells us that the Cuffley airship on fire looked "like a new incandescent gas mantle when it is first lighted."

Several weeks passed in busy preparation, and on the night of 27th November airships once more crossed the North Sea, for a raid on the north-east coast of England. Between ten and eleven o'clock that night they cruised over Yorkshire and Durham, and dropped more than a hundred bombs ; but only one person died, and she from shock, while the injured numbered sixteen. The damage to property was slight. Actually the casualties suffered by the attackers greatly exceeded those of the attacked.

A correspondent tells us that the searchlights became very active along the coast shortly after eleven o'clock. Overhead there was the noise of many aeroplanes, like buzzing bees. Every now and then the wings of a seaplane showed up white and clear in the beams of the searchlights. Our airmen went up, and were on the alert waiting to attack the invaders. From seaward came the roar of guns ; the patrol boats off the coast were at work. At about 11.45 a searchlight found the quarry, and immediately a score of other white beams flashed across the sky, and revealed the raider so clearly that its ribs and gondolas were distinctly seen. Aircraft guns now came into action, and the Zeppelin began to show signs of uneasiness. It tried all its tricks to escape from the searching fingers, but in vain, and then rapidly dropped its bombs and gradually moved seaward.

Suddenly a spot of light appeared on its envelope, and began to spread rapidly. Before long the airship was in flames and falling. As it dropped the burning mass assumed the shape of a pear, and finally, splitting into two parts, plunged hissing into the sea. Another German airship had met its doom, and the strains of the National Anthem rose from thousands of lips, as they had done in similar circumstances around London. All that was left to mark its last resting-place was a big patch of oil upon the sea.

The town did not suffer severely, the casualties were trifling, and not one of the many munition factories was injured. Two bombs which dropped in the middle of the local football field caused real annoyance, because they ploughed up the ground and made play impossible for some time to come. A local footballer who examined the ground observed that " the Boches never did understand sport as we do."

" Sitting in the lounge of a local hotel at tea the next afternoon were several groups of youngsters with wind-tanned faces and tired eyes. Some of them might still have been at Eton or Harrow, but for the uniform which they wore. They had been up all night, but they were very happy. Scraps of conversation gave a hint as to the work in which they had been engaged. 'It wobbled as it went, and I saw them chuck out stuff of some sort, and then it was a case of fireworks. Waiter, bring some more hot toast; we have just time for it, so buck up.' To-night the same youths will be steering about in the frosty upper air praying for more Zeppelins to conquer."

A second airship circled over the Midland counties, dropping bombs, and about six in the morning approached the Norfolk coast on her return journey. It travelled slowly, and showed signs of having been "winged" by gunfire. Near the coast it seems to have made some repairs. As it sailed out to sea the guns of the land defences opened upon it, and again the gunners declared that it was hit. Nevertheless it soared high, and proceeded rapidly eastward. Thousands of persons had gathered on the sea-front to watch its flight, and as it grew dim in the distance they loudly expressed their disappointment that it had been permitted to escape. Many went home, and thus missed the tragic sequel.

"Dawn was just breaking over the sea, when there came a redder dawn. At first it was just a rosy glow, and some thought the sun was coming up from behind the bank of mist. But a few had glasses, and they were just able to perceive in the dim morning light the form of the raider, with a golden patch on her side. Swiftly the patch widened, till it almost hurt the eyes to watch it. For ten seconds it was as though the sun had indeed come up—had leapt over the horizon upon an astonished and unready world. Then the airship broke and dropped: some say it bent in the middle, and pitched headlong; others, that it split into separate parts, one falling rapidly, and the other following more slowly, till both were lost to view behind a fog bank. All was over in less time than it takes to tell, leaving behind a red and smoky glare. Then from the level of the sea there rose a tall, black column, hanging motionless. It stayed there for more than an hour—a vast ebon monument, marking a grave. Hardly any other trace was left but this—this and a trifle of flotsam and a little oil on the water. Some time afterwards a British airman flew in from the sea and descended on the coast. He was carried shoulder high through the crowded streets, while the sirens on the ships shrieked triumphantly."

For their fine work during this raid three officers of the Royal Naval Service were decorated. *Flight-Lieutenant Edward L. Pulling* was awarded the Distinguished Service Order, and *Flight-Lieutenant Egbert Cadbury* and *Flight-Lieutenant Gerard W. R. Fane* received the Distinguished Service Cross.

* * * * * * *

The last raid of the year took place on the following morning (28th November), when all Britain was ringing with the good news from the north-east coast. Shortly before noon, when a haze was hanging over London, an enemy aeroplane flew over the great city, and dropped six bombs, which injured nine persons, but did only slight damage to property. The machine made off at once; but its triumph was brief. At a quarter-past two, as it flew over Dunkirk, the French brought it down. They found that it carried two naval lieutenants, who had with them a large scale map of London. There were many people in this country who thought that the advent of this raider meant that the Germans, having lost six airships in the course of four raids, were going to discard the Zeppelin in favour of the aeroplane as a weapon of "frightfulness." Whether this view was correct or not time alone could decide.

Before I conclude my account of the discomfiture of the Zeppelins, I must mention the name of *Lieutenant A. de Bath Brandon*, a New Zealand barrister, who returned to this country on the outbreak of war and joined the Air Service. Although he could not certainly claim to have brought down an airship "off his own bat," he did notable service in attacking the raiders and co-operating in their destruction. At the beginning of April 1916 he attacked a Zeppelin in the London area, and, climbing above it, dropped several bombs on it, three of which, he believed, took effect. Half an hour later he dropped two more bombs on the airship. Probably it was this vessel (L15) which came to grief in the Thames estuary in April 1916. During the raids mentioned in this chapter he was up several times. He was in the air when Lieutenant Sowrey brought down his Zeppelin, and also when an airship was destroyed at Potter's Bar.

Strafing the Zeppelin off the Norfolk Coast.

(*From the picture by D. Macpherson. By permission of The Sphere.*)

CHAPTER XIX.

HOW A BRAVE MAN REDEEMED HIS HONOUR.

THE story which I am about to tell you is one of the most romantic that ever was told. It sounds as though it were taken from a boy's book of adventures; but it is true—every word of it—and serves as another illustration of the old saying that truth is stranger than fiction.

The hero of the story is Lieutenant-Colonel John Ford Elkington, who, when the war broke out, was in command of a battalion of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment. He was a distinguished soldier, and wore on his breast the Queen's medal with four clasps, which he had won by good service in the South African War. He was then fifty years of age, and was described as a typical British officer—clean-cut, and lithe of limb, with frank, fearless, yet kindly eyes. He was six feet in height, and was regarded as a born leader of men.

At the head of his battalion he crossed over to France with the Expeditionary Force, and fought at Mons. During the terribly trying retreat there came a moment when his judgment was at fault. He made a mistake—as every man does one time or another; but it was a mistake which the Commander-in-Chief dared not overlook, especially in those critical days when our army was constantly in peril of being overwhelmed.

Colonel Elkington was tried by court-martial, with the result that the following announcement appeared in the *London Gazette*:—

"*Royal Warwickshire Regiment.—Lieutenant-Colonel John F. Elkington is cashiered by sentence of a General Court-martial. —Dated September* 4, 1914."

To be "cashiered" is to lose one's commission, and to be dismissed from the army in disgrace. For a man of honour and spirit you cannot think of a more terrible punishment. It means that his career in the army is at an end; that thenceforth he is shunned by his brother-officers, and is forced to live his life under a cloud. Many a man so discharged has committed suicide, rather than live on, "unwept, unhonoured, and unsung," avoided by his friends and disgraced in the eyes of his family. "If I lose mine honour, I lose myself."

Colonel Elkington freely acknowledged that he was to blame, and that his sentence was just. There was no slur upon his courage; it was his judgment that had been at fault. Like the brave man that he was, he refused to give up life's struggle in despair. He determined to strive with all his might to win back that honour and esteem which he had lost. He was too well known to enlist in the British army, so he joined the French Foreign Legion as a private.

In Chapter I. of our second volume I told you something about this remarkable branch of the French army. It is composed, you will remember, of men of all nations, who are allowed to enlist without any inquiry as to their past, or without being obliged to reveal their real names. Many of the soldiers of this legion of "lost souls" are desperate men, who place no value on their lives. They are drilled hard and worked hard; they are badly paid, and they are expected to form part of every "forlorn hope." No enterprise is too difficult for them; they flinch from nothing.

No doubt in the ranks of the Foreign Legion Colonel Elkington might have discovered many men who had formerly worn an officer's uniform, but had been forced to discard it by crime or folly, or, as in his own case, by lacking in discretion at some critical moment.

As a legionary he saw constant service on many battlefields. He fought with his Swiss, Italian, American, and Russian comrades on the Western front, in Alsace, and in the Vosges, and no man in the Legion excelled him in bravery and devotion. Before long the smart, keen, well-set-up Englishman, who was always ready to go anywhere and do anything, attracted the attention of his officers. Then came the great French offensive in Champagne (September 1915), and with it his opportunity. During the furious fights of that week-long battle the Foreign Legion hurled itself again and again with the utmost fury upon the enemy. Splendid deeds of daring were done hourly; every man was a hero. A handful of legionaries, of which Elkington was one, attacked and captured a position of the highest importance. Though they were mercilessly shelled and fiercely assailed with machine gun and bayonet, they held it for four long days, and it was the bull-dog spirit of the Englishman that inspired them to their dogged resistance. Twice in a single week the colours of the Legion were decorated with the Cross of War.

On the fourth day of the battle (28th September) the legionaries made a superb advance. They pushed on over the German trenches through a hailstorm of machine-gun fire, utterly regardless of life and limb, and John Ford Elkington led the way. A shot hit him below the knee, and he fell while his comrades pushed on. For hours he lay in that valley of death; no stretcher-bearer dared venture into the zone of fire. By the time he was rescued his wound had become badly diseased.

In the hospital at Grenoble he was tenderly cared for by the surgeons and nurses, and his wife, who had never lost faith in him, cheered and encouraged him by her presence and affection. For months he lay between life and death, but at last recovered. One day General Joffre himself visited the hospital and pinned upon his breast the highest award of valour known to the French army.

You can picture for yourself the surge of joy that swept through the stricken man's heart as the Commander-in-Chief of the Allied armies thus recognized his gallantry and devotion. He had been branded by a court-martial with dishonour, and he was maimed for life; but he had "made good." Henceforth he was numbered with the bravest of the brave; the past had been wiped away, and once more he could hold his head high amongst the soldiers of every nation.

The story has an even happier ending than this. In September 1916 the following announcement appeared in the *London Gazette*, which two years before had recorded Colonel Elkington's downfall:—

"*The King has been graciously pleased to approve the reinstatement of John Ford Elkington in the rank of lieutenant-colonel, in consequence of his gallant conduct while serving in the ranks of the Foreign Legion of the French Army. He is accord-*

Lieutenant-Colonel John Ford Elkington, D.S.O.

(*From a photo by Lafayette.*)

ingly reappointed lieutenant-colonel of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment."

Some time later his Majesty conferred the Distinguished Service Order upon him.

So we leave Colonel Elkington, lifted out of the pit of dishonour and discredit, and restored to the esteem of all men, to the favour of his sovereign, and to his rank in the army. Never did man more nobly atone for a fault; never did a braver spirit more completely triumph over a reverse of fortune.

There is a lesson in Colonel Elkington's career for you and for me. All of us are prone to err, and any one of us may by a fault or a mistake of judgment fall from the position which we have honourably attained; but while life remains we are afforded a chance of redeeming the past, and in our effort to do so we shall rise to even greater heights of honour than we ever reached before, if not in the eyes of man, assuredly in the judgment of Almighty God.

"Life every man holds dear; but the brave man
Holds honour far more precious-dear than life."

CHAPTER XX.

BACK TO THE SOMME.

ON the last day of the year 1916 a very important dispatch from Sir Douglas Haig was published. It gave in outline an official story of the whole struggle in Picardy from the day on which the guns first began to thunder down to the 18th of November, after which very unfavourable weather put an end to operations on a large scale for the rest of the year.

At the opening of his dispatch Sir Douglas Haig tells us he and General Joffre had long decided upon an offensive in the summer of 1916, but that he wished to put it off as long as possible, so that his officers and men might be better trained for the great adventure. But by the end of May the Italians were being so severely pressed in the Trentino, and the French were being so sorely tried at Verdun, that both commanders came to the conclusion that they could not delay their attack any later than 1st July.

The object of the Great Push, Sir Douglas Haig tells us, was threefold. In the first place, it was undertaken in order to relieve the pressure on Verdun. In the second place, it was intended to help our Allies in other theatres of war by preventing the enemy from moving troops from the West to the East; and in the third place, it was meant to wear down the enemy's forces.

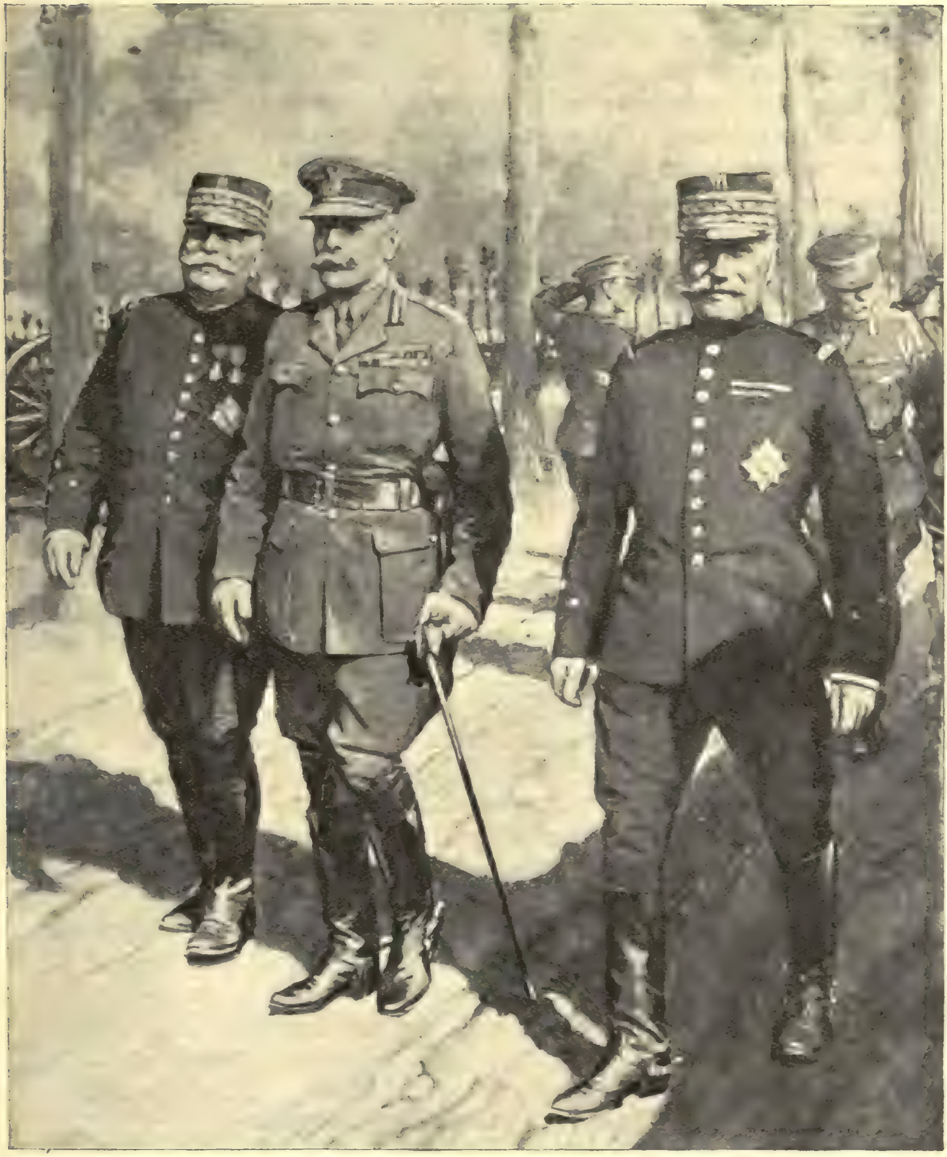
In the course of his dispatch the British Commander-in-Chief divides the fighting between 1st July and 18th November into three stages. The first stage, he tells us, opened with the attack of 1st July, and came to an end about 17th July, when the southern crest of the main plateau between Delville Wood and Bazentin-le-Petit was in our hands. The second stage lasted for many weeks, during which the enemy, having lost his strongest defences, and being now fully alive to his danger, put forth his utmost efforts to hold on to the main ridge. By 9th September we were firmly established on the ridge, and our soldiers had clearly proved themselves to be better fighting men than the Germans.

In former pages of this volume I have told you in detail the story of these two stages of the great Somme offensive. I am now about to describe the third stage, which brought the main operations of the year 1916 to an end.

When I broke off my account of the second stage (see page 108) nearly the whole of the crest of the main ridge on a front of some 9,000 yards from Delville Wood to the road above Mouquet Farm was in our possession, and we were thus able to observe the slopes beyond. East of Delville Wood for a further 3,000 yards to Leuze Wood we were firmly established on the main ridge, while still farther east, across the Combles valley, the French were pushing forward on our right. But though the centre of our lines was well placed, difficult ground on our flanks still remained to be won.

Look at the map (page 63), and find the village of Ginchy, which, you will remember, was gallantly stormed by Irish regiments on 9th September. From Ginchy the crest of the high ground runs northward for 2,000 yards, and then eastward, in the form of a long spur, for nearly 4,000 yards. On this eastern spur is the village of Morval, commanding a wide field of view in every direction. The Morval spur, you will notice, completely commands from the north the broad and deep valley in which the small town of Combles lies. At this time the French were working their way up the high ground which runs to the east of Combles. Their objective was Sailly, on the Peronne-Bapaume road, about two miles east of Morval. A glance at the map shows you that if we could carry the Morval ridge and the French could advance along the high ground to the east of Combles, that place would be surrounded, and, sooner or later, would be bound to fall. The British now set themselves to seize the Morval ridge, while the French aimed at Sailly.

The task was very difficult in both cases ; but Sailly was the tougher nut to crack. To the east of that village you can see the large wood of St. Pierre Vaast, which was strongly fortified by the Germans. Between the wood and the valley



Three Leaders on the Western Front.

(*By permission of The Sphere.*)

Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig, commander of the British forces in France, is in the centre of the group; on the left is General Joffre, generalissimo on the Western front; and on the right is General Foch. Both French generals are wearing the star of the British Order of the Bath (K.C.B.).

of Combles there is only a narrow road, which in some places is little more than a defile. Clearly the French would have to fight hard for every inch of ground, and their progress was bound to be slow. The British, pushing towards the Morval spur, would have to work hand in hand with the French if success was to be attained. Happily the cordial good feeling between the Allies made this easy. Each side was eager to help the other, and obey the orders of one commander.

Now that you understand the position on the right flank, we must hurry away westward, and see what was happening at Thiepval, which, you will remember, still defied us. We had long given up all hope of carrying this terribly strong position by a rush, and for months, with great patience, had been nibbling away its defences bit by bit. In Chapter X. I told you how splendidly the Wiltshires and Worcestershires advanced against the position on 24th August, and dug themselves in, at one place, within five hundred yards of the core of the stronghold. From that date onwards, by slow and ceaseless effort, we wrested from the garrison trench after trench, and strong point after strong point. The Germans made frequent counter-attacks, most of which failed completely. When they managed to win a little ground they paid dearly for it, and sooner or later they were hurled back with heavy loss. Nevertheless, this great stronghold delayed our advance seriously by holding up the left of our line. The time had now arrived when it must be carried completely.

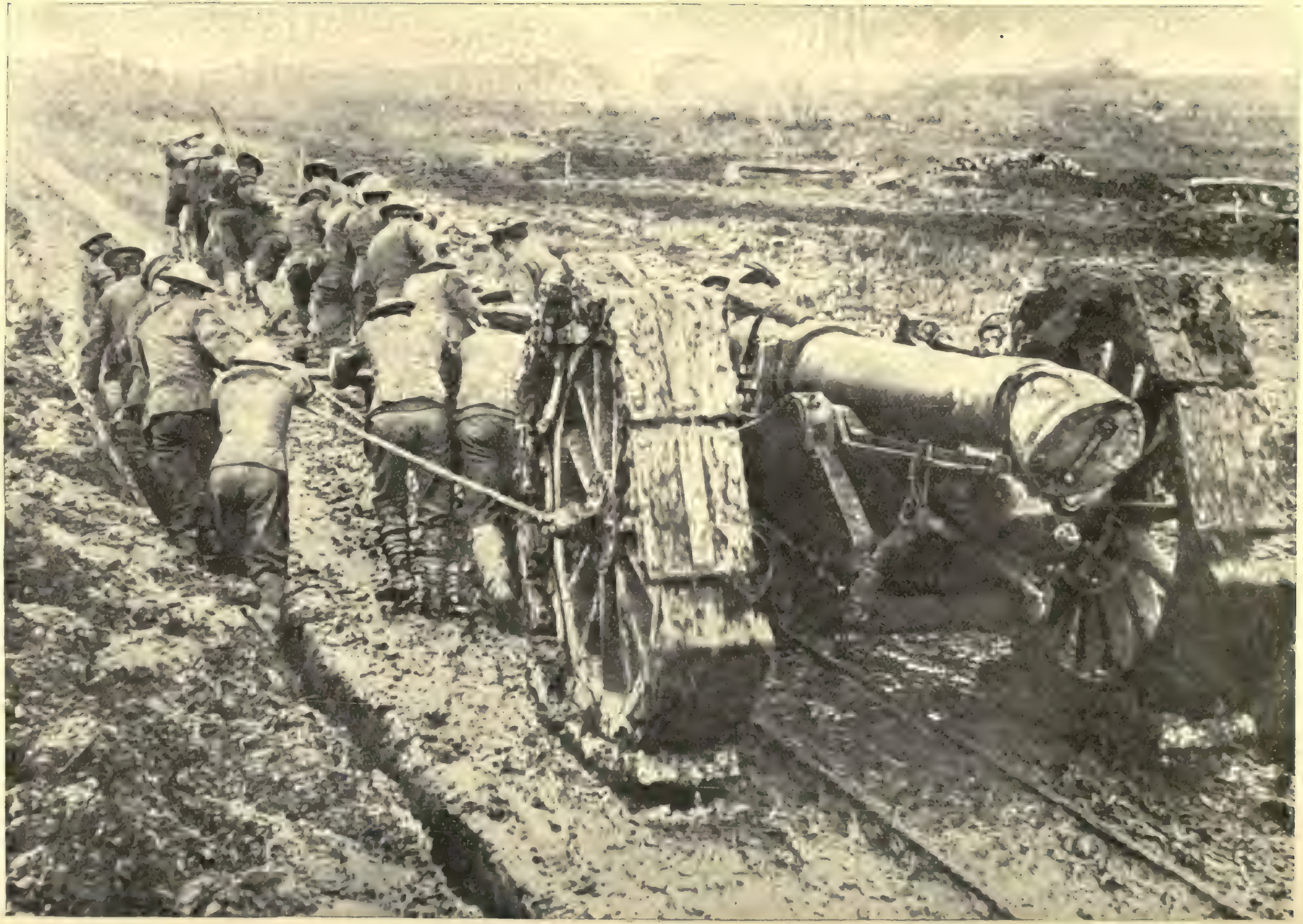
A great Allied attack was arranged for 15th September. Sir Douglas Haig's plan was to stand fast on the high ground to the north of the Albert-Bapaume road, and to push forward his right against Morval. If sufficient ground was gained in this direction, he meant to advance his left across the Thiepval ridge, and capture the villages of Martinpuich and Courcelette. Meanwhile the French on the right were to advance on Rancourt as the first step to the capture of Sailly. How this movement fared we shall learn in succeeding chapters.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE COMING OF THE TANKS.

BEFORE I describe the attack of 15th September I must give you some account of a new and extraordinary weapon of war which we first used on that occasion. We are accustomed to praise German skill in inventing devices for the battlefield and German secrecy in preventing the details of these devices from becoming known, but in this case we altogether beat the Germans at their own game. We were the first to invent the " land ships," known as Tanks, and until they were seen on 15th September the Germans had not the remotest idea of what they were like. Rumours seem to have reached Germany some five or six weeks earlier that the British had a strange new engine of some sort, for we know that a special kind of armour-piercing bullet was issued to the soldiers. Otherwise the enemy was quite in the dark as to the nature of our new device. The Tanks were so carefully hidden in the rear of our line that most of our own soldiers knew nothing of them until they saw them on the battlefield. When they appeared the Germans were taken completely by surprise, and as the monsters advanced, crawling over the shell-holes and trenches, and spitting fire from loopholes, many of them held up their hands in surrender or fled to the rear terror-stricken. According to a New Zealander, " Fritz was so astonished that you could see the eyeballs starting out of his head."

Some of you know what a caterpillar is. I do not mean " the grub that makes the butterfly," but the curious arrangement which is used instead of wheels for motors which have to carry heavy loads across soft and irregular ground. In case you have not seen a caterpillar, I will try to describe its appearance and tell you how it works. Suppose you try to walk



Manhauling a Big Gun along a Muddy Road on the Somme Front. [*British Official Photograph.*

Notice the caterpillar, which lays down a broad track on which the wheels run, and so are prevented from sinking into the soft ground.

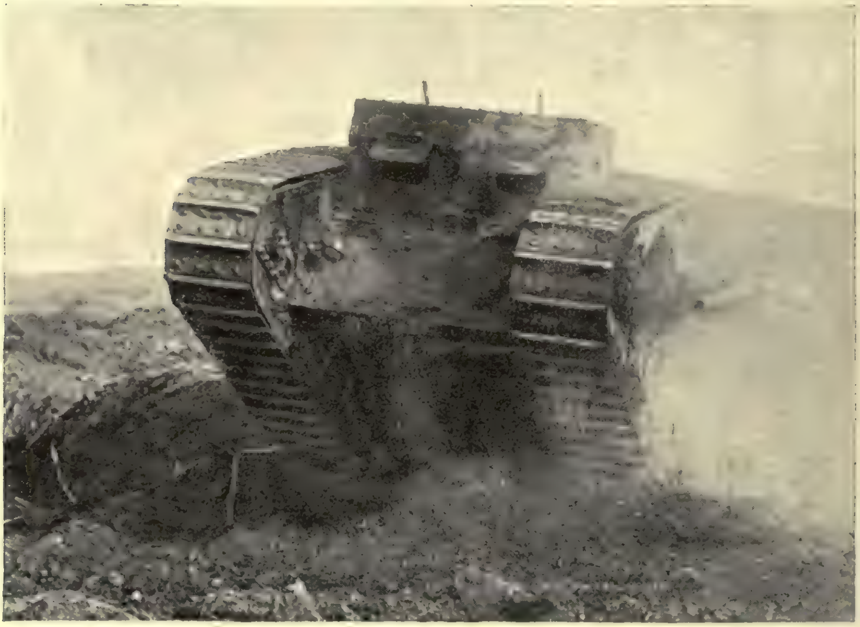
across soft, muddy ground, you soon find that you sink deeply into it, and that your progress is very slow and difficult. If, however, you fasten to each foot a broad piece of wood, you find that you do not sink in very far, and that you are able to travel over the soft ground much more easily. Your weight is now spread over a larger surface, and the pressure on any particular spot is much reduced. It is this principle which is adopted in the snowshoe and the *ski*, and also in the caterpillar.

If you were to lay down broad planks across the soft, muddy place, you could pass a fairly heavy load across them; but this would take much time and labour, and you could only proceed at a snail's pace. But suppose you could make your motor lay down its own track as it advanced? Why, then, you could get along at a fair rate over even the softest and most irregular ground.

The caterpillar consists of an endless chain of broad bands or feet which take the place of a wheel. By means of sprocket wheels the caterpillar is pulled round by the engine, and while the feet in the centre are firmly held to the ground by the weight of the motor, those at the back rise off it one by one, and the corresponding feet in front are laid down. The weight of the motor is thus distributed over a larger area, and the machine can travel across ground which is impassable for vehicles with ordinary wheels, however wide their tyres may be. Caterpillars were first attached to ordinary motor vehicles, which from quite early in the war were used for dragging big guns over fields and miry roads.

You have frequently heard of armoured motor cars in these pages. During their invasion of Belgium the Germans employed lightly-armoured cars for scouting purposes. Later on, both sides used cars which were so heavily armoured that no bullet could pierce them. They were supplied with machine guns, sometimes carried in a cupola or turret. Such cars took part in the fighting in all the theatres of war, and they did excellent work. During the invasion of Wallachia, one German car with machine guns caught a Rumanian battalion unawares and mowed it down in less than a minute at a range of 100 yards. It then attacked the Rumanian positions, and by directing a fierce flanking fire upon them, forced our ally to retreat. It was the combination of the caterpillar with the armoured motor-car that gave us the Tanks.

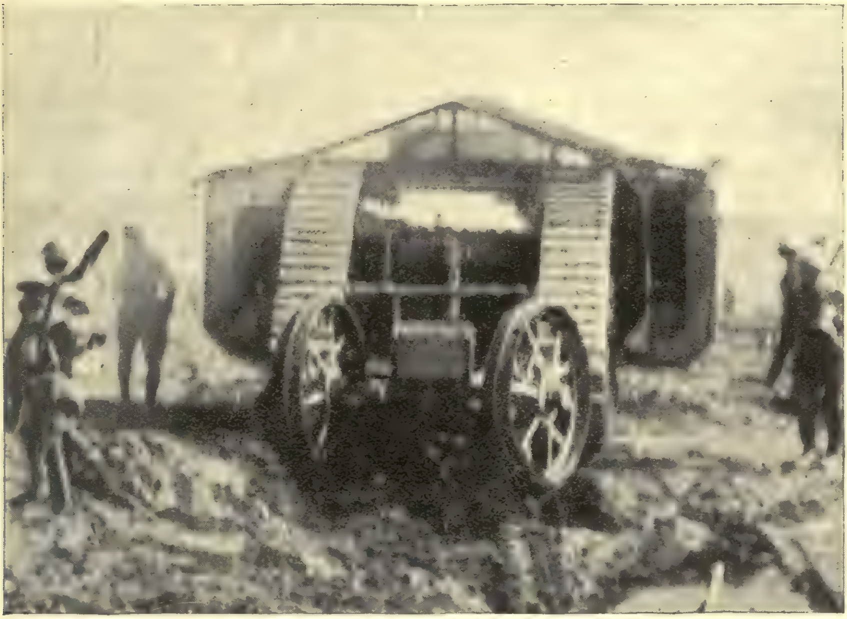
Look carefully at the photographs on this and the next page; they show you a front and stern view of a Tank. You notice that the machine is completely armour-clad, and is proof against machine-gun bullets, bombs, and even shells from light guns. On each side of the body of the Tank you see what looks like a fat cigar projecting fore and aft. Round these cigar-shaped structures run the caterpillars. By means of the projecting portions the machine is able to bestride a trench or shell-hole and drag itself across to the other side. There are no wheels, except two, for steering purposes at the stern of the machine.



Forward View of a British Land Ship.
(*British Official Photograph.*)

When the news reached England that Tanks had been used on the Somme, and had proved effective, people were all agog to know the names of those who had constructed them. A member of the Government explained in the House of Commons that the idea of such machines had suggested itself to officers of the Royal Naval Air Service when they were serving with armoured motor cars in Flanders during the early days of the war, and that the " land ships " had been built by the

Director of Naval Construction. Many other persons had assisted in the work; but the officer who had done more than any one else to realize the idea was Commodore Murray Sueter, R.N., a distinguished submarine officer who had turned his attention to flying, and had played a large part in establishing the Royal Naval Air Service. He was described as a man who knew all that there was to know about aeroplanes, seaplanes, and airships, and was at the same time a first-rate sportsman.



Stern View of a British Land Ship.
(*British Official Photograph.*)

* * * * * * *

Not until two days before the attack in which the Tanks were first used did our men set eyes on them. Then almost the sole topic of conversation in billets, rest camps, and trenches was the wonderful new device which, as one wag observed, "was going to shorten the war by five years." The new armoured cars, it was said, were simply marvellous. They could climb trees, cross trenches, break through entanglements, smash up gun positions, waddle up and down shell-craters, stalk through walls and houses—in fact, do everything except talk and eat.

A correspondent tells us that when he first saw the Tanks he sat down on the grass and laughed until the tears came into his eyes; they were so comical in appearance. Another correspondent gives us the following account of them:—

> "They perhaps resemble in general outline a toad more than anything else—a toad rather lengthened towards its hinder end. In size the thing is—well, large. Not to be too exact, it is bigger than an ordinary motor car and smaller than a labourer's cottage. In these circumstances it can hardly be expected to move fast, and the slowness of its advance, coupled with the fact that it has no visible wheels or legs, gives it a perfectly ridiculous solemnity.
>
> "Tanks are painted in what naturalists call protective colours, the colours of snakes or lizards—that is, browns and greens and yellows—which harmonize admirably with the background and the ground over which they move. . . . When one sees the unspeakable things moving with their great blunt noses thrust in the air before them, limbless and wheelless, going with a movement as smooth as that of a snake, but majestic and deliberate as a giant tortoise, it is such a mixture of pantomime and horror as no nightmare ever equalled.
>
> "They are armour-clad, but the thickness of their armour I must not tell, although the Germans doubtless know it. For their armament, it may vary as you please, but is of the machine-gun type; and the guns, it is needless to say, can fire in all directions. Each carries its commanding officer and a crew of drivers and gunners. . . . Officially the new craft call themselves his Majesty's land ships, and every one carries its own name—Delphine, Daphne, Delsie, Cordon Rouge, or Crême de Menthe *—as proud as any ship of the sea. But whatever they call themselves, the army generally calls them Tanks."

Later in the year a German war correspondent told his readers that the British Tanks had been greatly increased in size and number, and had much improved in many ways. The new Tanks, he said, were from 33 to 36 feet long, 12 to 15 feet broad, and 6 to 7 feet high. They were covered with 12-inch armour plate, had a loopholed turret at the end of each side, as well as two cupolas on the top. The machines contained two 4-inch guns and eight machine guns, and were steered by a rudder with two high and very heavy wheels. The crew numbered fifteen to twenty.

* * * * * * *

I am sure that by this time you understand the object which Sir Douglas Haig had in view in using these Tanks.

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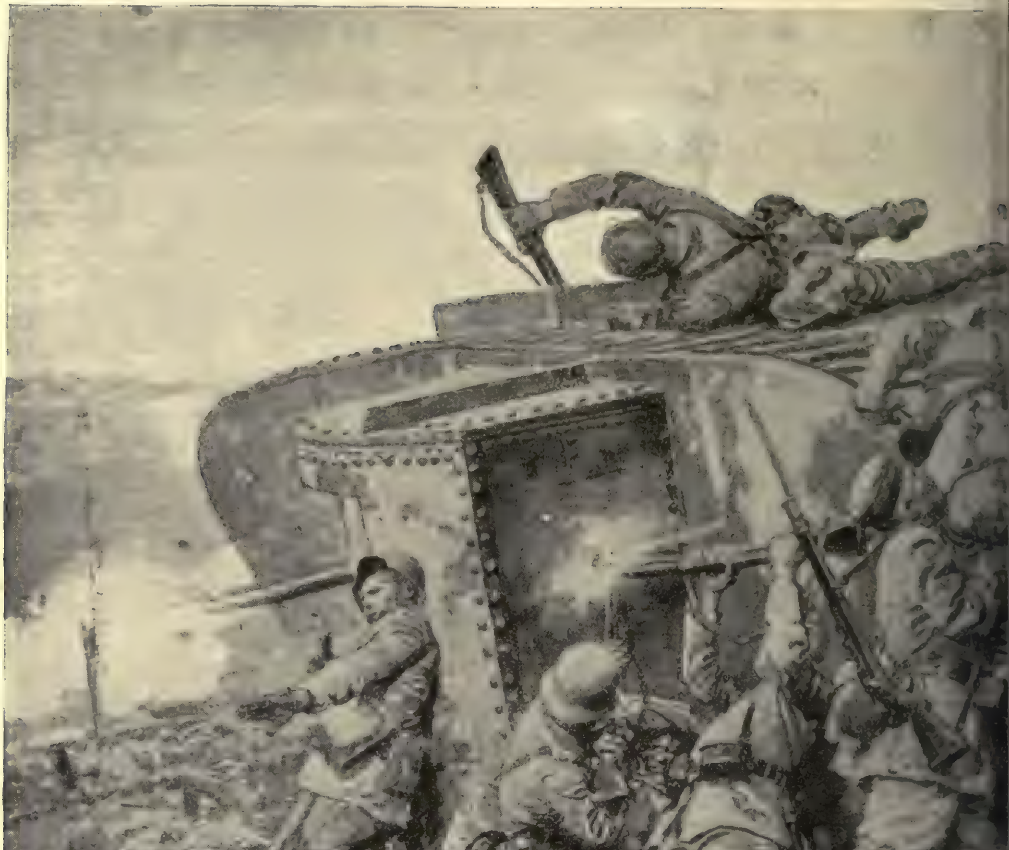
* *Kraim-de-mont*, the name of a liqueur.

During the advance on the Somme our men frequently made short work of the enemy's trenches, only to find themselves held up by the fire of redoubts and nests of machine guns. In carrying these strong positions we lost very heavily. The Tanks were devised to destroy the redoubts and the nests of machine guns, and thus enable our men to advance with smaller loss than formerly. Thus, you see, the Tanks were intended to be life-savers. They were to precede an infantry attack and to clear the way, and this they certainly did. They were so powerful that they crashed through everything in their path, breaking down trees and houses alike. From the following account, which appeared in a French magazine, you will obtain a good idea of how a nest of machine gunners was destroyed by a Tank.

> "The whole crew climb on board this fortress on wheels. I install myself in the narrow space by the side of my machine gun, whose muzzle is pointing outside the steel-plate side of the Tank, and fix my eye to the loophole. 'How hot it is!' says my neighbour. 'It will be worse in an hour!' Through my loophole I can see just a strip of sky, which looks light to me, although the day has not yet fully dawned. In front I see fields which have been ploughed up by shells of every size. Further on are the woods in which we are to operate.
>
> "There is a crater to the left of the wood which, according to the reports of our airmen, the Germans have converted into a fortress. This our Tank is to destroy. On the right of the wood there is a very powerful redoubt with walls, and row after row of barbed wire. A real 'nest,' which we are to demolish. By Jove, how stifling it is! Suddenly the glare of a rocket lights up the sky, followed by ten, twenty, thirty others. A sharp whistle sounds strangely in our prison. The hour has really come; we are about to start."

Away goes the Tank, rocking from side to side as it waddles over the ruts and uneven ground. One needs to have "sea legs" to avoid being hurled against the steel sides; our friend steadies himself by holding on to the handle of a case of machine-gun ammunition. The caterpillars are dragging the machine along like a centipede, and now and then the crew hear the cheers of the infantry, who hail the monster joyfully as it slowly passes them. As it advances the earth everywhere around its track is ploughed up and thrown aside. But how slowly it travels! The Tank now rolls down the slope of an exploded mine, breaking through a house *en route*. All goes well. Now it reaches the bottom, and then, without apparent trouble, begins to climb up the other side. Once more the strip of



How a British Tank halting for Repairs was

(*From the picture by F. Matania.*

"Then a Tank strolled along, rolled over the trench, with fire flashing from its flanks, and delivered parapet. That was not all. The Tank, exhilarated by this success, went lolloping along the way in by a horde of German soldiers. These men closed upon it with great pluck, for it was firing in a most it with the butt-ends of rifles, jabbed it with bayonets, fired revolvers and rifles at it, and made a wild enemy back."

unsuccessfully assaulted by German Infantry.

By permission of The Sphere.)

it into the hands of the infantry with nearly four hundred prisoners, who waved white flags above the
search of adventures. It went quite alone, and only stopped for minor repairs, when it was surrounded
deadly way, and tried to kill it. They flung bombs at it, clambered on to its back, and tried to smash
pandemonium about it. Then our infantry arrived, attracted by the tumult of the scene, and drove the

sky appears to the man at the machine gun, and the jagged trunks of the trees show him that the wood has been reached.

Bang! A shell has hit the Tank "head on," and the impact makes the whole fabric shudder and vibrate; but otherwise no damage is done, and it calmly proceeds on its way. Then comes a heavy thud, and our machine gunner sees a flash above his head. The Tank has stopped for an eighth of a second to fire a gun. The Boches are getting it badly. They reply, but their bullets make no impression on the monster. They have as much effect on its scaly sides as pellets of bread thrown against a wall. Inside, the noise is like that of a myriad of hailstones beating against the window panes of a moving train.

The Tank is now near the "nest" which it is to destroy. Our machine gunner can distinguish the sandbags heaped up, and the walls pierced with holes. Little white flakes are coming from these holes, as though they were safety-valves for the escape of steam. They are the guns of the enemy firing at the Tank.

The machine lumbers steadily on, and nothing can stop it. A ditch—it is cleared; an incline—it is scaled; a heap of rubbish from a demolished house—it is passed over. Then the first barbed-wire entanglements are reached. The Tank does not even make an effort. Everything gives way before it; everything is crushed or torn up. Splinters of steel and wood spring up on all sides; the wire is broken to fragments and crushed into the earth. Our machine gunner feels as though he were in the interior of a vast iron wedge which is cutting through something like butter. All the time he and his comrades are firing without ceasing—hand on gun and eye glued to the loophole.

Then come a thud, a powerful panting, and a moment's stop. The nose of the Tank scatters sand and cement bags, and throws them to right and left as if it were ploughing up a field. Another violent shock, a heavy blow, and a crash. The monster is going straight through a wall! It is in the midst of the nest! All at once ugly German heads, with terror on their faces, appear on both sides. The Tank's machine guns crackle; their bullets whistle down the German trenches, which are now enfiladed, and along the underground passages leading to the dug-outs. The Germans throw themselves flat on their stomachs, or raise their arms to heaven, while some of them seek safety by flight. A whistle sounds in the Tank, and it stops. Then wild cheers are faintly heard, and the crew see outside their own infantry, who are taking possession of the " nest," and gathering up everything living which remains.

* * * * * * *

During the battle which I shall describe in the next chapter, one of our airmen sent to headquarters the following wireless message :—

" *A Tank is walking up the High Street of Flers * with the British Army cheering behind.*"

It was an actual fact. The Tank was crashing through the *débris* of the street, firing into the houses on either side, and droves of Germans were holding up their hands in token of surrender. The crew had hung out a placard with this announcement—

GREAT HUN DEFEAT—SPECIAL.

* * * * * * *

Let me tell you of an exciting adventure which befell a Tank during the later fighting of the year. It set out one morning, and in due time rolled over a German trench with fire flashing from its sides. Some four hundred of the occupants of the trench at once waved white flags above the parapet, and were taken prisoners by the infantry who accompanied the Tank. This was not all. The Tank, delighted with this success, went lolloping along in search of new adventures. Suddenly it came to a stop ; some minor repairs were needed. Immediately it was surrounded by a horde of Germans.

They closed upon it with great pluck, for it was firing in a most deadly way. They flung bombs at it, clambered on top of it, tried to smash their way in with the butt-ends of their rifles, jabbed it with their bayonets, and fired revolvers and rifles at it ; but without the slightest effect. Then our infantry, attracted by the noise, came up and drove the enemy back. The Tank, however, had done its work, for some two or three hundred dead and wounded Germans lay around its ungainly carcase. For a little while it seemed that the Tank was out of action ; but after a little attention and a good deal of grinding and grunting, it heaved itself up and waddled away.

* * * * * * *

* *Flare.* See illustration, pp. 232, 233.

Mr. Philip Gibbs, who tells the above story, and whose name you have frequently met with in these pages, says * that during the attack on 15th September two Tanks set out to attack the line from Combles to Morval. One of them ambled along slowly until it came within four hundred yards of Combles, far in advance of the infantry. "Here it sat for five hours, fighting the enemy alone and shooting down German bombing parties, until it was severely damaged." The other Tank reached the enemy's trenches near Morval, and, finding that it had left the infantry behind, went back to inquire for them. They had been held up by German bombers in the trench, so the Tank came to the rescue, bucked over the trench, and crushed the bombers into the earth before backing into a deep shell-crater and toppling over.

> "Here for an hour and a half it formed a barricade between British and German bombers, and the crew landed and tried to hoist it out of the shell-hole under heavy fire. One of the men picked up a live bomb flung by the enemy and tried to hurl it to a safe distance away from his comrades, but was blown to bits. Finally the 'skipper,' with his surviving men, came back to our lines, leaving the derelict monster to serve as a barricade."

* * * * * * *

A London boy who saw the Tanks at work in the High Wood said :—

> "It was like a fairy tale! I can't help laughing every time I think of it. They broke down trees as if they were match-sticks, and went over barricades like elephants. The Boches were thoroughly scared. They came running out of shell-holes and trenches, shouting like mad things.
>
> "Some of them attacked the Tanks and tried to bomb them, but it wasn't a bit of good. It was a rare treat to see! The biggest joke that ever was! The Tanks just stamped down the German dug-out as one might a whop's nest."

* * * * * * *

When, as you will read later on, our men won the first trench of Martinpuich, Tanks were waddling in advance of them. Our men were held up for a time, but the monsters went on alone, and had astounding adventures.

> "They went straight through the shells of broken barns and houses, straddled on top of German dug-outs, and fired enfilading shots down German trenches.
>
> "From one dug-out came a German colonel, with a white, frightened

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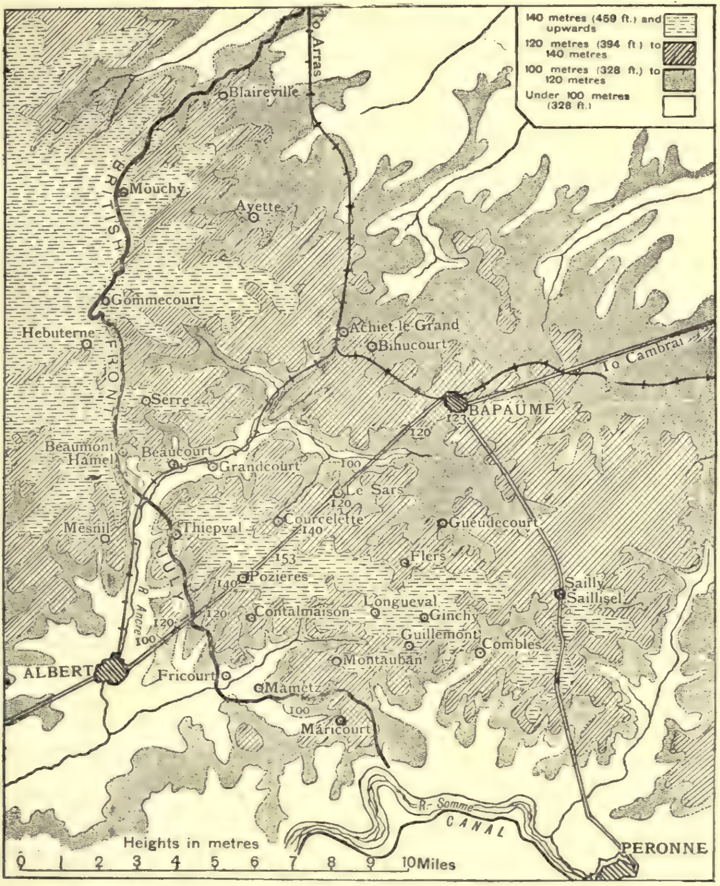
* *The Battles of the Somme,* Chap. XXXI.

face, who held his hands very high in front of the Tank, shouting,' Kamerad! Kamerad!'

"'Well, come inside then,' said a voice in the body of the beast, and a human hand came forth from a hole which opened suddenly and grabbed the German officer.

"For the rest of the day the Tank led that unfortunate man about on the strangest journey that the world has ever seen."



Map of Somme Battlefield, showing Height of Land.

Another Tank, finding a hundred Germans with uplifted hands shouting "Mercy! mercy!" actually shepherded them to the rear, and handed them over as prisoners.

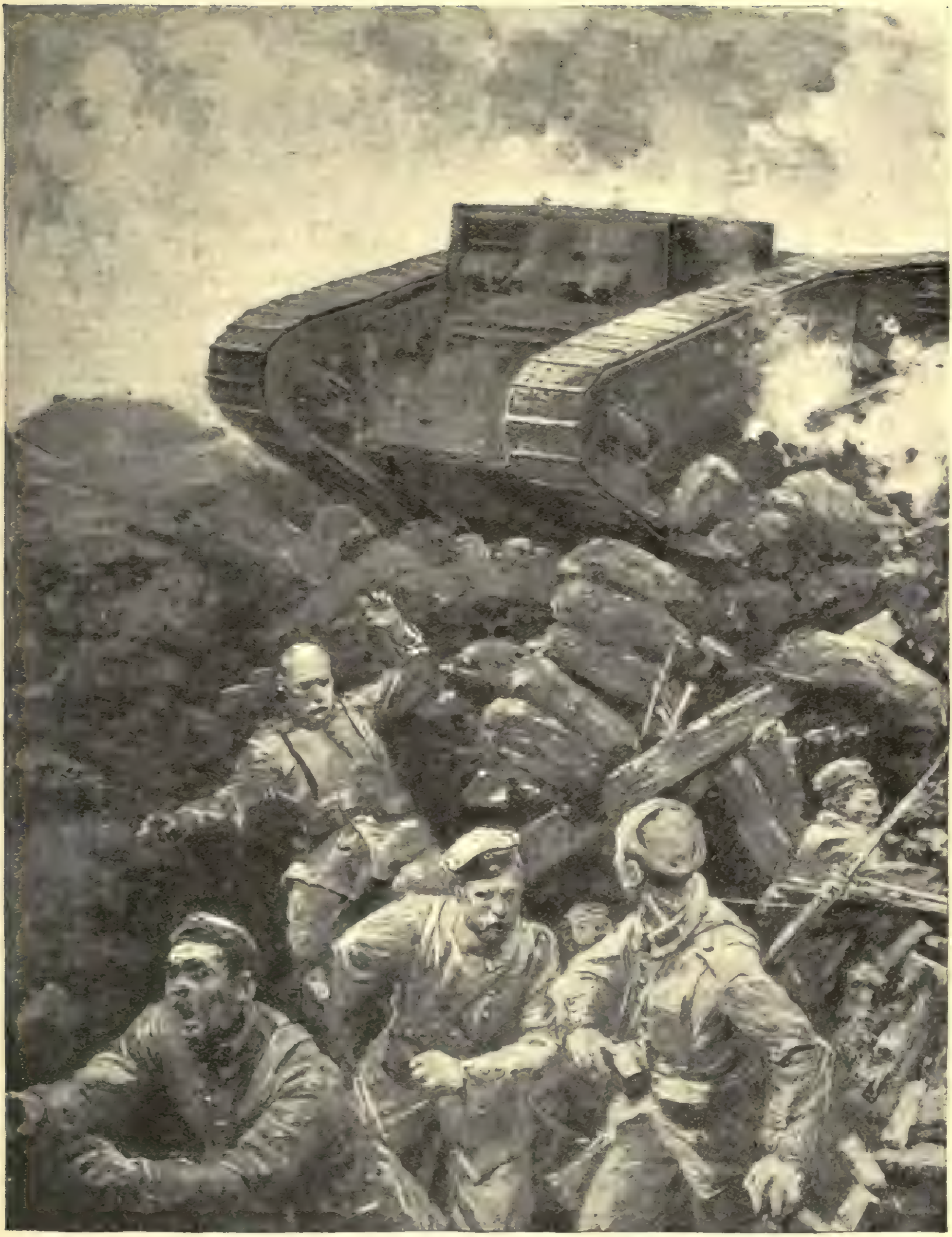
* * * * * * *

A soldier of the Black Watch tells us that he had heard a lot about what the Tanks were capable of, but he took the whole of the stories with a block of salt. After he had been a week or so with a Tank, which he and his comrades called the "Tyneside Teaser," he was forced to admit that the Tanks were worthy of their reputation. The ground across which he and his friends had to advance was worse than a switchback railway: it was all ups and downs, owing to the shelling, which had continued for days before the advance.

In half an hour they came to a group of shell-holes, and thought it was all up with the Teaser, but it wasn't. "She was given her head, and soon got over. It was exciting the way she dipped and ploughed, and rocked and twisted, and every moment the crew thought she would be wrecked. But she pulled through, and wasn't a bawbee the worse for her rough passage."

As she approached the German trench she came upon a shell-hole as big as a granite quarry, and when she disappeared into the hole in full view of the enemy, Fritz, Hans, and Co. let up a great cheer, for they thought they had seen the last of her. They came rushing to the lip of the crater to enjoy the joke. When they looked down, they saw to their amazement that the Teaser was quietly working her way up the steep side, and was getting ready to tackle them. As soon as she was on easy ground again the infantry were able to drive off the Germans.

> "The foe ran for their lives, and the faster they ran the more furious was the fire which we sent after them. The Teaser made a sudden swerve to the right, and actually managed to cut off the running Huns from their own trenches. Too late they saw what had happened, and they tried to force a way past us. The Teaser let them have a broadside, and that put an end to their hopes. They ran back to find another way into their trenches, and then our reinforcements arrived to lend a hand.
>
> "Tank and Highlanders swept forward side by side, the soldiers calling out at the top of their voices, 'Scotland for ever!' The Tank went straight for the enemy's parapet, and the first stretch of barbed wire went down before it as though it had been merely strands of cotton wool. We got through at express speed, and were able to enfilade the trench from two different directions. Under cover of our fire the rest of the infantry advanced.
>
> "It was magnificent to see the Black Watch charge. Soon they were down among the dug-outs, digging out the Boches wholesale, and we were able to help a lot by keeping up a continuous fire on the enemy whenever he showed himself. Repeatedly the enemy tried to bring up machine guns and take our chaps in the rear; but the Teaser was there all the time like a



A British Tank approaching a German Trench.

(*From the picture by M. Ugo. By permission of The Sphere.*)

"Many thousands of Germans," says a correspondent, "have seen the things coming into battle, and they must have been a terrifying sight to those who saw them first, dimly outlined in the gray dawn, spitting fire and death as they came. One can pity even Germans who only saw the vague horror moving against them, and were killed by it before they knew what it was that killed them."

good watch-dog, and every rush the Germans made they were riddled by our fire. They soon found that that game didn't pay, and before long the whole defence crumpled up, leaving the Teaser and its Highland escort in possession of a powerful set of trenches."

* * * * * * *

A writer tells us that there is a nautical atmosphere about the Tanks. Their officers salute navy fashion. One of them said that Tank men must be everything, from a mechanic to a sailor, as handy men as ever sail the sea. On one occasion the "Cordon Rouge" came ploughing its way across a crater-pitted valley in order to report to a certain brigadier for duty. When it reached his dug-out a smart young lieutenant slipped briskly through the hatchway and "came ashore," then ran down the steep entrance to the dug-out three steps at a time, and greeted the brigadier with a quarter-deck salute. "'Cordon Rouge' is ready for action, sir." "Right," said the brigadier. "It's very kind of you to call, but don't bring her downstairs!"

* * * * * * *

The advent of the Tanks led to wild hopes on the part of the public at home that they would work miracles, and when they failed to perform them there was much disappointment. Some of the infantry hoped that the deadly machine guns of the enemy had at last been killed, and that in future they would merely have to walk over the enemy's trenches behind the Tanks. They were hoping too much. Before such a happy state of things could set in the army would have to be furnished with thousands of Tanks, and during the Somme battles it had only about fifty.

Tanks were introduced in the September fighting merely as an experiment, in the hope of discovering their strength and their weakness, so that a careful judgment as to their future usefulness might be made. There is little doubt that in the September fighting they proved, on the whole, so successful that they justified themselves. They saved many lives and helped us to gain many important positions. Probably they have come to stay, and could they be utilized in large numbers, trench warfare would be a thing of the past, and machine-gun redoubts would lose their terror. It needs no wild flight of imagination to picture future warfare as being waged between Dreadnoughts, cruisers, and destroyers ploughing the land instead of the sea.

CHAPTER XXII.

HOW WE CAPTURED COURCELETTE, MARTINPUICH, AND FLERS.

BEFORE you can fully understand the fighting of 15th September and the following days, you must be clear as to the position of the various villages upon which our attack was to be directed. We were about to try to carry the third German position, which up to the 14th July was in an unfinished condition. Between that date and the beginning of September the Germans dug furiously every dark night, and made it very strong indeed. They also prepared another series of positions in the rear.

You will remember that in most places we were now on the high ground, from which our artillery observers could overlook the slopes and valley pockets to the east. The trenches of the German third position ran for six miles through a string of fortified villages, all of which lay on the eastern slopes of the main ridge. Turn to the map on page 229, and find the first of these villages—Courcelette.* You will notice that it stands to the left of the Albert-Bapaume road, about two miles beyond Pozières. About three-quarters of a mile to the south-east of Courcelette, and on the other side of the road, is Martinpuich; and some two miles to the east of Martinpuich is Flers, on the road leading from Longueval to Bapaume. From Flers the line ran through Lesbœufs † and Morval to Combles. Long before our soldiers went over the parapets on 15th September these villages had been reduced to a mere stick or two above a broken heap of brickwork.

On Tuesday, 12th September, our guns began to thunder all along the front from Thiepval to Ginchy. The work of

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* *Koor-se-let.*

† *Lay-bew.*

A Desolated Village on the Western Front. [*British Official Photograph.*

flattening out the German trenches had begun. Meanwhile the troops which were to make the attack were being brought up from the rear across the trampled, shell-pitted fields and the ruins of the villages from which we had already driven the enemy. Had you been able to look into the assembly trenches on the evening of 14th September, you would have seen on the British left a division of Canadians detailed to advance against Courcelette. On their right lay a Scottish division of the New Army which had won high renown at Loos; its business was to encircle Martinpuich—the capture of that village was to come later. Still further to the south were two Territorial regiments, the one of Northumbrians, and the other of Londoners; they were to clear High Wood, in which we had already obtained a footing, but no more than a footing. On their right were the New Zealanders—clean-cut, fine-looking men in felt hats with a red ribbon round the brim—who had won such fame in Gallipoli. Their business was to make good the ground to the east and north of Delville Wood.

Next to them were the Guards, not the old Guards who fought at Ypres and Loos, and in many other fierce battles at the time when we were struggling against fearful odds. Many of the old Guards were lying under the soil of France, but the new Guards who had taken their places were men of the same build, resolution, and discipline. Along with a division of the old Regulars they were to move against Lesbœufs and Morval, while on the extreme right a division of London Territorials was to form the defensive flank.

Most of our men were fresh and in good fettle. The Guards had not been in action since Loos; the Canadians were on the Somme for the first time, and the New Zealanders had never before fought on French fields. Two of the remaining divisions had seen a good deal of service in this region, but the others had only just been brought up.

On the extreme left of the battle line a division of the Fifth Army was set the task of making an advance for the purpose of drawing off the attention of the enemy from the real attack. It was to push forward against what the Germans called the Wonder Work, a very strong trench and redoubt on the south-east of the Thiepval position.

On the night of Thursday, 14th September, while the assembly trenches in other parts of the line were filling, this preliminary attack was made very skilfully and successfully. The Wonder Work was stormed and carried on a front of a thousand yards, and the Germans were deceived into thinking that the British were directing all their efforts to the capture of Thiepval. They launched a counter-attack, and thus drew off troops which were soon to be sorely needed in other parts of the line. Our men beat them back, and took a heavy toll of their numbers.

* * * * * * *

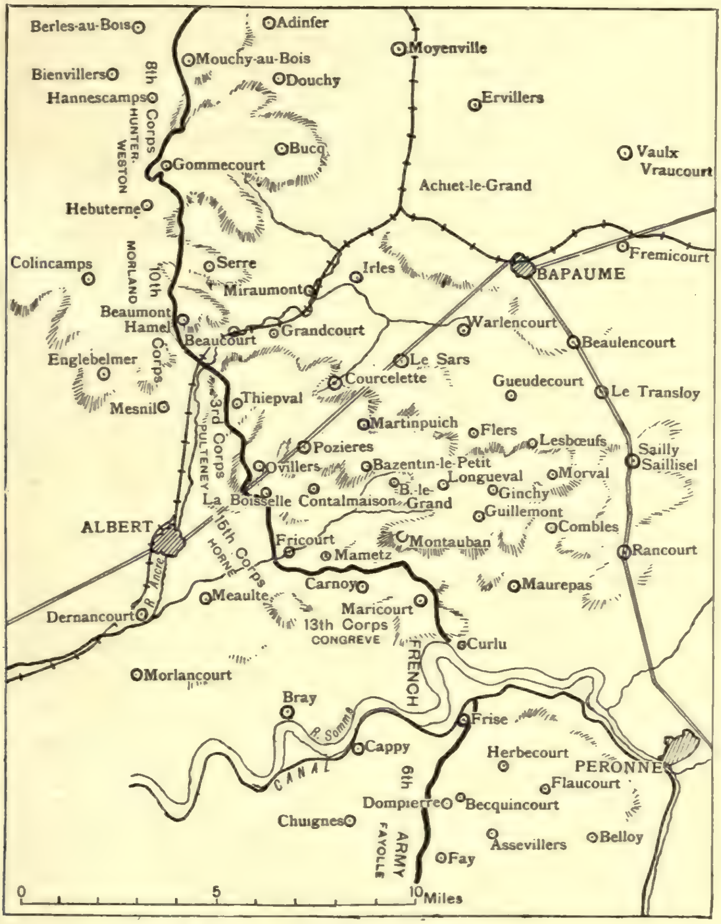
The rising sun of 15th September flushed the low-lying clouds with crimson. An officer who noticed the glowing sky said, " It is the promise of victory like the sun at Austerlitz." * Before six o'clock the British bombardment, which had now lasted for three days, redoubled its fury. For twenty minutes our guns kept up a terrible fire ; the faint light of morning was stabbed with incessant flashes and shell bursts. The enemy was pinned to his positions.

Meanwhile our men with fixed bayonets stood ready in their trenches, while their officers closely watched the creeping minute-hand of wrist watches. It was no easy task which they were about to undertake. The enemy had massed against them a thousand guns of every kind, and his defences consisted of a triple line of entrenchments with a series of advanced posts, manned by machine guns. Had our men been set such a task on 1st July we might well have doubted the result. But after two and a half months of experience our generals had complete confidence in their troops, and felt sure that they would succeed. They knew that the Germans believed our offensive to be at an end. Their High Command did not think it possible for any army to carry on the attack with the same fierceness and resolution as formerly. It was thought on the German side that our divisions were broken, that our men were overtired, and that our ammunition was spent. The enemy was soon to be undeceived.

At 6.20 our men went over the parapets in fine style. They were filled with the spirit of victory, and half the battle was already won. The sight of the Tanks, that now appeared for the first time, increased their usual good humour, and all sorts of jokes were bandied about as they moved

* Town of Moravia, Austria ; the scene of the great battle in which Napoleon defeated the Austrians and Russians on December 2, 1805.

onwards. But while the Tanks were a source of amusement to our men, they were a terrifying mystery to the Germans. Before they could collect their dazed wits British bayonets were upon them. In the previous chapter I told you something of the exploits of the Tanks. You must not, however, imagine that they did all the work—far from it. The assaults made that day were hard and costly, and the brunt of them fell upon the infantry. The Tanks helped in a very effective fashion, but we must not ascribe the victory to them.



Map of the Somme Battlefield.

We will first follow the Canadians on the left, and see how they fared. Amongst them were a number of French-Canadians, dark-eyed, lithe-bodied men, who spoke to the French villagers in their own tongue, and were ready to do and die for their motherland. We now know that the enemy was himself preparing to make an attack. In order to find out what men were opposed to him, he sent out bombing parties just before the word " Go ! " was given to the Canadians. The bombers came suddenly out of the darkness and flung their grenades into our trenches. For a few moments they managed to get into one of our positions, but not a man of them left it. A Canadian Lewis-gunner killed all who came over the parapets, and his comrades with bombs wiped out the rest.

Though the Canadians had just beaten off a counter-attack, they were quite ready to advance when the word was given. At the exact moment they swept forward, and rolled like a tide over No Man's Land, with three Tanks lumbering after them. Their left had to sweep down the slopes towards the edge of the village of Courcelette and there halt, while the French-Canadians on their right cleared up the captured ground and joined them. On the way the left found itself in front of a trench running out at an angle from the village. This they had to take in their stride.

Very gallantly they did it. Through a storm of shrapnel and high explosives they made their way down the slope amidst shouts and cheers. It was a long journey across the open to Courcelette, and many men fell by the way. The Germans in the trenches flung their bombs and fired their rifles until the Canadians were upon them with the bayonet ; then they threw up their hands. Outside the village our men paused to take breath and to dig in, and it was not until late in the afternoon that the ground behind them was cleared and a sugar factory which harboured a nest of machine guns was smashed up by a Tank. Then all was ready for the assault on the village itself.

The honour of capturing the place was given to the reserve battalions which had been engaged in clearing up the ground ; amongst them were the French-Canadians. They had to advance across ground that was alive with bursting shells and the clatter of machine guns from Germans in hiding. It is said that in one place seventy of our men advanced against a part of the German line, but were swept down. Another seventy took their places, but also fell to a man. The third wave, however, carried the position and entered the village, where they had to fight their way yard by yard. Soon the Tank ("Crême de Menthe") appeared in the streets, and by 6.30 the village was in our hands. It had been held by 1,500 Germans; but less than that number of Canadians had forced them from their dug-outs, and had sent them off to the rear as prisoners. One brown-eyed Canadian boy went into a dug-out all alone, and came up with twenty prisoners, all big, tall men! A great feat had been accomplished. Courcelette had been captured, and our men were able to dig in beyond it.

All that night they had to beat back counter-attack after counter-attack. Seven times the Germans came on, and seven times they were driven back. They could not oust the Canadians, though the men from overseas were few in number and sometimes in great straits. It is said that one of the German attacks came to a strange conclusion. A handful of Canadians in a dug-out were making merry and amusing themselves by shouting Red Indian war cries. The Germans who were advancing over No Man's Land heard these blood-curdling sounds, and fearing that they came from something even more horrible than the Tanks, turned and got back to their own lines with more haste than dignity.

We are now to hear how Martinpuich fell. You will remember that a Scottish division on the right of the Canadians was instructed to encircle the village but not to capture it that day. The main stronghold of the place was held by a Bavarian division which had won renown by its defence of the Hohenzollern Redoubt. The Bavarians were in such great force that it is probable that they were preparing to attack. The Scots, however, gave them no chance. They advanced nearly a thousand yards in six minutes, made short work of the snipers in the shell-craters, and were only checked on the outskirts of the village, where a nest of machine guns blazed away at them. Two Tanks, however, came up, and amidst the wild cheering of the Scots, who danced and waved their helmets in joy, smashed up the hiding-places of the Germans. By a quarter-past five in the evening Martinpuich was ours. The Scots had done even more than they had been ordered to do.

Meanwhile, in that old cockpit of fierce fighting the High Wood, a great struggle was in progress. Two months ago we

"A Tank is walking up the High Street of

(From the picture by Christopher Clark.

This was the message sent to Headquarters by a British airman on September 15, 1916. It was an and droves of Germans were holding up their hands in token of surrender. The crew had hung out a

Flers, with the British Army cheering behind.”

By permission of The Sphere.)

actual fact. The Tank was crashing through the *débris* of the street, firing into the houses on either side,
placard with this announcement : *Great Hun Defeat—Special.*

had first gained a footing in it, but we had been forced back, and had only been able to cling to its southern corner. Across its northern half, on the very crest of the ridge, ran the third German line, which was held by four regiments of Prussians, with a fortified mine-crater on the left, a machine-gun redoubt on the right, and wire and barricades in front. It was a desperate nut to crack, and had so far defied us. Before the day was over it fell before the London Territorials.

> "They had been born and bred in London," writes Mr. Philip Gibbs. "They had worn black coats and 'toppers' in the city, all the officers among them, and the men had been in warehouses and offices and shops down Thames-side and away to Whitehall. They had played the gentle game of dominoes in luncheon hours over a glass of milk and a Bath bun. They had grown nasturtiums in suburban gardens, and their biggest adventure in life had been the summer manœuvres of the dear old 'Terriers.' And now—they fought through German trenches and lay in shell-holes, and every nerve in their brains and bodies was ravaged by the tumult of shell-fire about them and by the groans of the wounded who lay with them. But these Londoners who fight on their nerves were no less staunch than men like the Scots and the north-country lads, who, as far as I can see, have no nerves at all."

The first attack failed, but on a second attempt, which was made a little after noon, the Londoners won through, and swept the wood clear, though not without losing heavily.

You will remember that the business of capturing Flers was confided to the New Zealanders and to a division of the New Army which lay on their right. The new Army Division was composed largely of "Derby recruits," who had never yet faced the shell-fire on the Somme. Old soldiers wondered how these new fellows would "stick it." They need not have wondered: the Derby men fought like veterans on that day. They passed through the fire unflinching, and they leaped into the German trenches with all the courage and spirit of the fighting men of old. Flers was entered and captured. I have already told you how a Tank marched up its main street followed by our cheering and laughing troops.

The New Zealanders—men of Auckland, Canterbury, Otago, and Wellington—advanced at dawn, and as their waves went forward many fell beneath the shrapnel and machine-gun fire; but almost without a check they reached what was known as the German switch-trench, 500 yards from their starting-place. In this trench they found foemen worthy of their steel. A grim and deadly struggle took place. It is said that only four Germans were left alive, and that the ranks of the men from "down under" were gravely thinned before the trench was won.

Beyond them were two lines of trenches deeply dug and strongly wired. Our gun-fire had destroyed neither the wire nor the trenches, so the New Zealanders took cover while the Tanks that lagged behind them came up. When at length they arrived they made short work of wire and trenches alike, and shortly afterwards the New Zealanders not only cleared this formidable line, but pushed on another 700 yards across a sunken road with steep banks and very deep dug-outs. The Germans, however, did not stay to meet them, and the New Zealanders took up a position on a line running westward from the top of Flers. They then swung to left, and without support on that side began to make a flanking attack up a valley running to the north-west and away from the village. They were now in a dangerous position, and were ordered to fall back to the line from which they had advanced. Their left flank was still unsupported, and the Germans were holding the shell-craters on that side. Through the night of the 15th–16th the enemy made many counter-attacks, but the New Zealanders set their teeth and hung on.

Upon this open flank a brigade of Germans, outnumbering the New Zealanders by more than two to one, made a steady and determined advance. The New Zealanders came out of their trenches, and met them in the open. The struggle was like a battle of the Middle Ages, when men trusted to their skill and to the temper of their weapons, and not to high explosives and quick-firing guns. In the end the German ranks were broken, and those who could fled. For many days following, the dogged courage of the New Zealanders was sorely tested. Twice on September 20th they were driven back, and twice they regained the ground which they had lost. Until the morning of 21st September bomb and bayonet fighting scarcely ceased. Single men and groups fought hand to hand in the shell-craters and in the trenches, amidst the crash of bombs and the cries of the wounded. But when the dawn came the New Zealanders were still holding on.

So far I have told you a tale of almost continuous success. You are now to hear how, in spite of the most splendid gallantry, we were foiled on the right. Ginchy, you will remember, had been carried by Irish troops on 9th September; but the enemy still held in the outskirts a very strong position known as the Quadrilateral. The road between Ginchy and Morval makes a bend, and passes through a wooded ravine, about seven hundred yards east of the former village. It was at this point that the Quadrilateral had been constructed. One of the old Regular divisions was sent against it, and was supported on the right by London Territorials, and on the left by the Guards. The London Territorials were to clear a long narrow strip of wood running from the Leuze Wood towards Morval, while the Guards were to advance from Ginchy to Lesbœufs.

I will first deal with the advance of the Guards, who had been allotted the most difficult task of the day. Correspondents tell us that it was a splendid sight to see these tall, fine, gallant men go forward against the enemy. For the first time in the history of the Coldstreams three battalions of this famous old regiment charged in line. Behind them were the Grenadiers, with the Irish Guards in their rear. They had to advance under the enfilading fire of machine guns massed in hidden trenches. "Men fell, but the lines were not broken. Gaps were made in the ranks, but they closed up. The wounded did not call for help, but cheered those who swept past, shouting, 'Go on, Lily-whites!'—the old name for the Coldstreamers—'Get at 'em, Lily-whites!'"

With lowered bayonets the Lily-whites went on, and suddenly found themselves checked by two lines of unknown trenches, strongly wired and defended by machine guns. Upon these trenches they made a frontal attack, in spite of the scourge of bullets, and the fighting was of the fiercest and most desperate character. The Germans bombed and fired to the last moment, and only yielded with a bayonet at their throats. By this time the Irish Guards had joined in the fray, and the trenches were captured. Then the victors passed on with a rain of bullets beating down on their right, and did not halt until they were more than a mile from their starting-point.

They could go no further. Many officers and men had fallen; the troops on their right had been held up, and their flank was "in the air." It was a bitter disappointment to the Guards to have to dig themselves in and seek cover in shell-craters, for the enemy was on the run and was busy dragging his guns away. The German machine gunners, however, were still busy, and to advance any further meant certain death. So the Guards decided to hold on to what they had gained, and through the night they sat tight under almost incessant shell-fire.

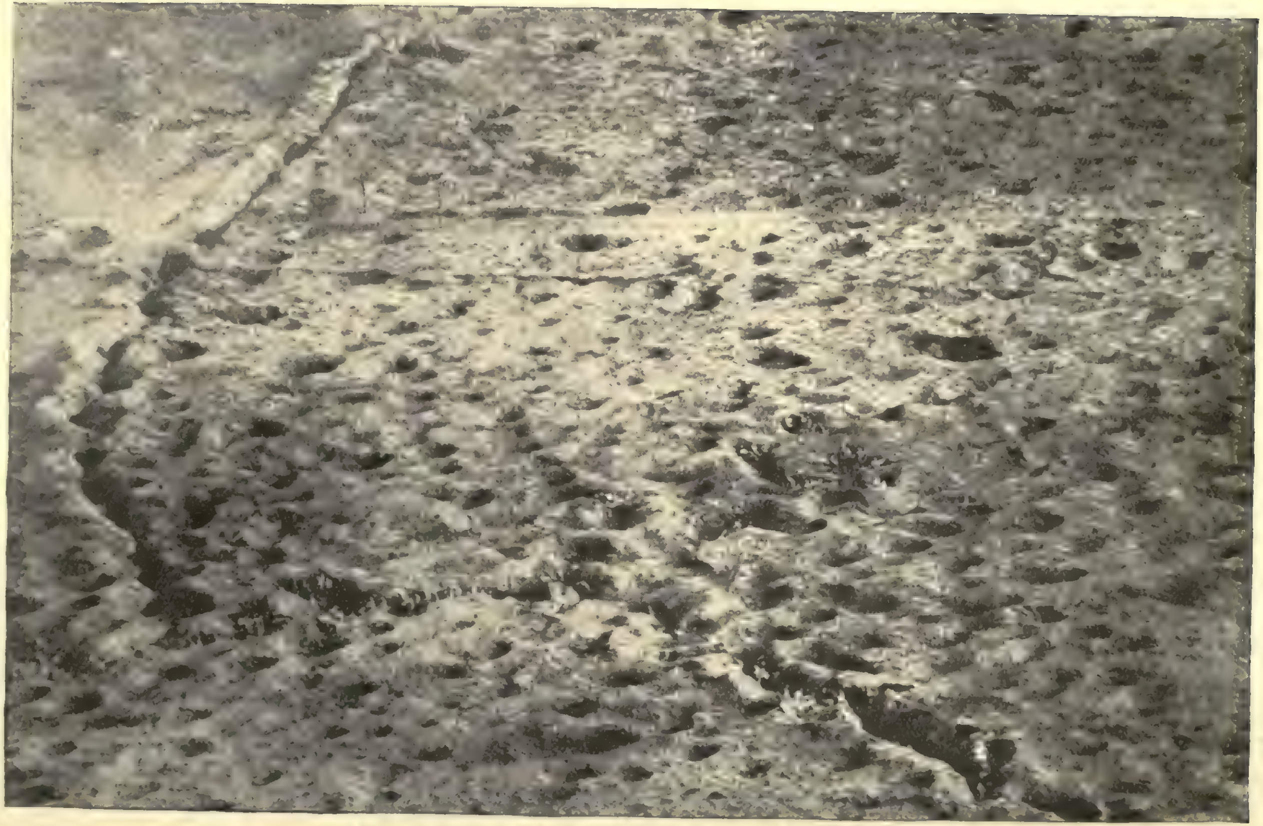
> " The night was a dreadful one for the wounded, and for men who did their best for the wounded, trying to be deaf to pitiful sounds. Many of them had hairbreadth escapes from death. One young officer in the Irish Guards lay in a shell-hole with two comrades, and then left it for a while to cheer up other men lying in surrounding craters. When he came back he found his two friends lying dead, blown to bits by a shell."

Through that awful night the courage and discipline of the Guards never wavered. They held their ground, and were prepared to do so to the last man.

Meanwhile the Regular division had been held up by the Quadrilateral, and the Londoners, though they had entered the wood which they were to clear, could make no headway without support in the centre. Thus on the right we had not attained our object. It was in this part of the line and at High Wood that we suffered our severest losses.

Sir Douglas Haig in his dispatch, which was published on 30th December, thus sums up the result of the day's fighting: " We had broken through two of the enemy's main defensive systems, and had advanced on a front of over six miles to an average depth of a mile. In the course of this advance we had taken three large villages, each powerfully organized for a long resistance. Two of these villages had been carried by assault in the course of a few hours' fighting. All this had been accomplished with a small number of casualties in comparison with the troops employed, and in spite of the fact that, as was afterwards discovered, the attack did not come as a complete surprise to the enemy. The total number of prisoners taken by us in these operations amounted to over 4,000, including 127 officers."

Our aircraft did nobly during that day. They destroyed thirteen of the enemy's machines, and drove nine more in a broken condition to the ground. They bombarded railway lines, and even the enemy headquarters, and directed the artillery fire with great accuracy. From time to time they came back with reports as to how the infantry were progressing, and more than once they dived down to astonishingly low levels, and enfiladed German trenches with their machine guns. Any



The Shell-pitted Ground on the Somme Battlefield. [*French Official Photograph.*

This wonderful photograph was taken from a French aeroplane at a height of about five hundred feet. It shows part of the French lines. The French are seen in a captured German trench; some of them are advancing by working along shell-craters. Notice the communication trench on your left. French reinforcements are seen arriving.

German kite balloon that appeared had short shrift, and during the whole week of this September battle they only allowed fourteen enemy machines to cross our lines. At the same time they made between two thousand and three thousand flights far behind the German front. A correspondent writes :—

> " The battles in the air have never been equalled. How many fights there were no one knows. . . . Village after village just behind the lines was bombed, and to complete the work, the airmen came down low enough almost to stroke the backs of the Tanks ; quite low enough to empty their bullet-drums at the enemy's infantry. The ' Archies ' fired at them in vain, though, as it seemed to me, scores of our craft were perpetually rolling across the sky on ball-bearings of shrapnel cloud. From half an hour before dawn to sunset there was a continuous sky-patrol enemywards. Every headquarters that day rang with aircraft messages."

Nor must the artillery be forgotten. Both before and during the advance their work was wonderful ; for fierceness and accuracy it had never been surpassed. Every " heavy " battery had its own particular field of fire and its own time-table. It worked exactly with the infantry, throwing its shells upon the enemy's trenches and redoubts, or creating curtains of fire before our advancing men. The field batteries showed great daring and dash in taking up new positions, and our forward observing officers pushed on to new stations immediately the infantry had won them, and from these view-points directed the fire of their batteries with great success.

* * * * * * *

The Guards, you will remember, had suffered very heavily. Amongst those who fell was Lieutenant Raymond Asquith, eldest son of the then Prime Minister. He was killed while leading his men through the enfilading fire from the corner of Ginchy village. A man of great promise and high scholarship, he was one of the first to answer the call of duty, and one of the noblest to fall while doing it.

We do not know what the enemy's losses were, but those who traversed the field after the battle was over tell us that in all its length and breadth it was simply littered with German dead. A correspondent declared that the whole battlefield was " one great graveyard." The prisoners seemed utterly dismayed, and many of them confessed that they had been surprised by our great and brilliant stroke.

* * * * * * *

While our men were thus engaged, the French were making rapid headway on the right. Turn to the map on page 63 and run your finger along the Peronne-Bapaume road till you come to Bouchavesnes.* This village was carried by the French on 13th September, two days before the great British advance. Its capture brought our gallant Allies, as you will notice, within three miles of Mont St. Quentin, the key to Peronne. Next day they seized a position to the south-east of Combles, and on the afternoon of the 17th they pushed on south of the Somme, and captured villages which enabled them to threaten Barleux, the strongest point in that part of the enemy's line.

On our side there were no important operations for the next week, but you must not suppose that there was no fighting. On the 16th the Germans heavily attacked the Canadians, while a newly-arrived Bavarian division flung itself against the New Zealanders. Both attacks failed, as did similar attempts to drive back the French. For nearly a week the Canadians were assailed every day, but without success.

On Monday, 18th September, we again attacked the maze of trenches known as the Quadrilateral. You will remember that this formidable work resisted all our attempts to capture it on 15th September, and that its stubborn defence held up our advance on the right. On the 18th the division which had failed three days before made a determined effort to carry the Quadrilateral. There was much heavy fighting at close quarters, and again the garrison resisted stoutly; but we closed in on it from all sides, and finally captured it. By the evening we had pushed our front five hundred yards beyond it, and we were now in the hollow in front of Morval.

* *Boo-sha-vain.*

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE FALL OF COMBLES AND THE DOOM OF THIEPVAL.

THE whole German third line, with the exception of Morval and Lesbœufs, was now in our hands. Bad weather prevented us from making a further advance until 25th September, when the general attack, which I am now about to describe, was launched. In this attack we aimed not only at Morval and Lesbœufs, but at the village of Gueudecourt,* which you will see on the map about a mile and a quarter north-east of Flers. We also hoped to capture the belt of country about a thousand yards deep which curved round the north of Flers to a point midway between that village and Martinpuich.

It was now clear to all observers that the German third line could not stand. Its main strongholds—Courcelette, Martinpuich, and Flers—had fallen, and the defence of the remaining villages showed signs of cracking. The enemy had been unable to push home any of his counter-attacks, and the hammer-strokes of the French on the right gave him no chance of "milking" other parts of the line, and thus collecting reserves with which to hold off our men. The Germans now relied mainly on their gun-power, but it was inferior to our own; and though it tore ugly rents in our ranks, it could not prevent our splendid infantry from advancing.

The week which began on Sunday, 17th September, was dull and cloudy, and the rain came down heavily every day until Wednesday. By Friday, however, the weather had improved, though the mornings were thick with autumn mists, which made the work of our airmen and artillery observers very difficult. Nevertheless, on the morning of Sunday, the 24th, our

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* *Gir-de-koor.* Our men found a difficulty in pronouncing the name of this village, so they called the trench which defended it the *Gird* trench.

"Go on, Lily Whites!" The Charge of the Coldstreams.

(*From the picture by R. Caton Woodville. By permission of The Illustrated London News.*)

In the great battle on 15th September, which resulted in the capture of Martinpuich and Courcelette, three battalions of the Coldstreams, for the first time in history, charged in line. The wounded did not call for help, but cheered on those who swept past them with the cry, "Go batteries opened a heavy and continuous fire on the points against which we were about to advance. On that day our aircraft destroyed six enemy machines and drove three others to earth.

As on 15th September, the Fourth Army was to open the ball with an attack on the left, so as to keep the enemy engaged in that part of the line, and prevent him from reinforcing it in the centre and on the right, where the Fifth Army was to complete the capture of the German third position. It was hoped that Combles and Thiepval would both be seized, and that the enemy would not only be pushed back to his fourth line of defence, but that we should be able to drive forward our own front to within easy reach of his new positions.

Monday was bright and cloudless; the intense heat of summer had gone, and it was an ideal fighting day. The hour of attack was fixed at thirty-five minutes after noon. Precisely at that moment our men went over the parapets, and in almost every part of the field were successful. They made the most perfect advance so far known in the Somme battles, and by nightfall all the points aimed at were won.

The main interest of the day's battle lay on the right. The Guards, eager to avenge their losses of the previous week, swept into Lesbœufs. South of them that Regular division which had carried the Quadrilateral at the second time of asking, captured Morval, which was, perhaps, the strongest position in the whole line. It was honeycombed with deep cellars, and there were mazes of trenches, sunken roads, and fortified quarries to be won before the place was securely held. Our men entered the village from the north, and as they did so the Germans came out of their underground refuges and surrendered in shoals. It was clear that their spirit was broken. They might have fought longer and harder, but their nerve had gone. The awful shell-fire which had crashed upon their dug-outs, and the regular fashion in which one stronghold after another had fallen before the British advance, had taken the heart out of them.

A German officer, who surrendered with his whole company, said: "Your soldiers surprise me by their *sang-froid*.* They are very cool and calm in moments when most soldiers lose their heads."

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* *Sang-frwa,* coolness, composure.

The London Territorials, who on 15th September had entered the long narrow strip of wood running from the Leuze Wood towards Morval, did not during this attack attempt to carry the wood. The Germans were waiting for them with massed machine guns, and no doubt our men would have suffered terribly within its shades. Instead of directly attacking the wood, they seized two lines of trenches on the west side of it, and thus were able to outflank the Germans. The trenches were strongly held by a large force with machine guns and trench mortars; but in five minutes they were captured, though the rabbit warren of dug-outs in an embankment nearly at right angles to the trenches gave more trouble. After four hours of fierce, savage fighting, the dug-outs were cleared. Some eighty prisoners were taken, and much ammunition was seized.

Combles was now surrounded on all sides save the east, where the French were battling for a neighbouring village. Unhappily, they failed to carry it that day, though they seized Rancourt, on the Bapaume-Peronne road.

By the time darkness set in that night we had advanced our front a full mile. The fall of Morval had given us the last piece of uncaptured high ground on the ridge. From Thiepval, through the High Wood to Ginchy and on to Morval, we were masters of the long-fought-for summit. Our only real failure was at Gueudecourt. A division of the New Army which had suffered disaster at Loos a year before on that very day, but had since done splendid work on the Somme, had entered the village, but had been driven out again.

Next day, assisted by a Tank and an aeroplane, this division made another attempt, and managed to carry the Gird trench to the west of the village. Sir Douglas Haig thus describes the exploit of the Tank and the aeroplane:—

> "In the early morning a Tank started down the portion of the trench held by the enemy from the north-west, firing its machine guns and followed by bombers. The enemy could not escape, as we held the trench at the southern end. At the same time an aeroplane flew down the length of the trench, also firing a machine gun at the enemy holding it. These then waved white handkerchiefs in token of surrender, and when this was reported by the aeroplane, the infantry accepted the surrender of the garrison. By 8.30 a.m. the whole trench had been cleared, great numbers of the enemy had been killed, and eight officers and 362 other ranks had been made prisoners. Our total casualties amounted to five."

This success ensured the capture of Gueudecourt, and brought our advance to within a mile of the German fourth position.

All that day and far into the night the French battered at the village which had so far defied them. Hour after hour the roar of their " seventy-fives " and the rattle of their rifle-fire were heard as they drew nearer and nearer to their goal. All round Combles star-shells and flares were going up, revealing, in their white, vivid glare, the desolation of the battlefield. Combles itself was dark and silent. As the night wore on, a few black shadows were seen coming out of the town. They were stragglers trying to escape. Some fell into our hands, others were killed.

> " The night was passing, but it was long before dawn—at 3.15—when a strong patrol of English soldiers with machine guns advanced down a tram line into the town of Combles. They were tired men, worn with fighting and craving sleep, and not in that night hour inspired by any thrill of joy because they were entering Combles in triumph. They were not quite sure how far the beastly place had been abandoned. News had come to them that the enemy had found a way out.
>
> " But you never can tell. There might be desperate fellows in the cellars; machine guns behind any of these broken walls. They went on slowly and cautiously, until they reached the ruined streets.
>
> " Dead men lay about, with white faces upturned to the stars. The ground was littered with broken bricks and twisted iron and destroyed wagons. But no shot came through the gaping holes in houses which still stood as roofless shells. It was all as quiet and still as death."

A halt was made at the railway line, and then our men saw through the gloom other tired figures advancing towards them. Were they friends or foes ? They were friends—Frenchmen. Salutes were exchanged, and there was much hand-shaking; but French and British alike were too war-worn for noisy rejoicing over their victory. The enemy, for the first time since the trench war began, had been compelled to give up a town without making a fight for it. The streets, cellars, and vaults of Combles were found to be littered with dead, and this fact probably explains why few prisoners were taken. Great booty, however, was secured in the cellars, which were stacked with rifles and stocked with ammunition.

* * * * * * *

" The success of the Fourth Army," says Sir Douglas Haig, " had now brought our advance to the stage at which I judged it advisable that Thiepval should be taken, in order to bring our left flank into line, and establish it on the main ridge above that village." Thiepval, you will remember, was the pivot of the German third line, and it was believed to be impregnable. The village was defended by very strong trenches and by three redoubts. Underneath was a long series of vaults and tunnels, all linked together and furnished with many man-holes, through which the defenders could pop up with rifles and machine guns in the most unexpected places. In this underground fortress the garrison had lived at their ease since 1st July. "The place," said a prisoner, "was quiet and happy. We had no great comfort below ground, no fancy furniture or fine decorations (our beds were just wooden planks raised above the ground), but we worked hard to fortify the vaults. We pierced many new tunnels. We made this underground world perfectly safe, and we were proud of it."

In earlier pages I have told you how we constantly nibbled at Thiepval, winning a trench here and a trench there, and gradually hemming it in until we had almost enclosed it. I have already told you how Mouquet Farm was captured. It consisted of a series of buildings, with barns and outhouses and stables, covering a large space of ground, and it stood about a mile to the east of Thiepval. The peace and security of the Thiepval garrison departed on the day when the farm fell into our hands. We were not, however, masters of the whole of it; there was a "mystery corner" at the north-west which the Germans still held.

After a bombardment which lasted for twenty-four hours, the attack began at 12.25 p.m. on 26th September, before the enemy had been given time to recover from the blow struck by the Fourth Army. Three waves of our attack completely carried Mouquet Farm and pushed on against the Zollern redoubt. Imagine the surprise of our men when they discovered that parties of Germans had come out of the tunnels of the farm, and were firing into their backs with machine guns. Happily, a young British officer in charge of a working-party saw them. At once he cried, "Throw down your tools, and come on, boys!" They wanted no second invitation. In a moment they were following their officer, and though only thirteen of them came back, they brought with them one German officer and fifty-five men as prisoners. It was six o'clock that night before they had cleared the tunnels of Mouquet of all living inhabitants.

The attack on Thiepval was a brilliant success. Our men leaped out of their trenches, and were over the German parapets and into the dug-outs before the machine guns could be got up to repel them. Prisoners were captured in droves. In Thiepval itself, however, and in the strong works to the north of it, the enemy fought desperately.

Those of our men who attacked on the left had the hardest time. They had to advance directly on an old chateau, from the ruins of which a fierce machine-gun fire beat down upon them. At once there was a call for the Tanks. One of the monsters, which had been lumbering along in the wake of the infantry, now came up ; and while our men were crouching in the shell-craters it heaved itself through the ruins of the chateau, with fire belching from its sides. The infantry then swarmed behind it, loudly cheering, and seized the few German gunners, who stood holding up their hands and begging for mercy. Unfortunately, the victorious Tank came to grief soon afterwards ; but not until it had done its work, and done it well.

All that day and all the following night the struggle continued. There were terrible fights in the dug-outs. Our men had to dive into dark entries and push underground along narrow tunnels to cope with an enemy that lurked in the holes and crevices. The entrances to some of the deeper dug-outs were blown in, and the occupants were smoked out. In the course of the fighting on the Thiepval ridge about 2,300 prisoners were taken and sent to the rear. In one case a party of sixteen Germans, under the escort of two English soldiers, turned on their captors and wounded them. They would have escaped but for a party of our men who happened to come up in the nick of time. The treacherous prisoners received their deserts.

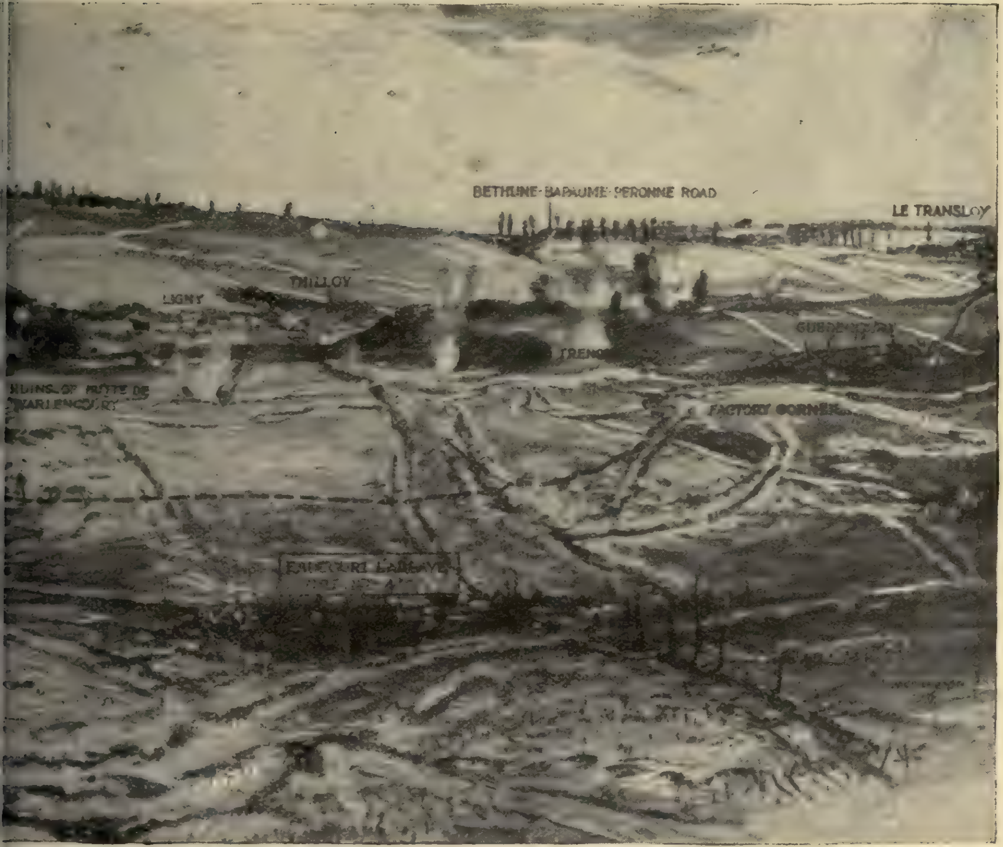
It was 8.30 on the morning of 27th September before the whole of the village was in our hands. Later in the morning the Germans concentrated a terrible artillery fire on the positions which they had lost, and attempted a counter-attack. Speedily, however, our guns got to work, and the enemy's fire was kept down.

On that evening the Allies had good reason to congratulate themselves. Their fortunes had never looked brighter. The

The British Advance on Bapaume.

enemy was now defending himself in his fourth line. He had lost the strongholds on which he had lavished all his skill and energy for many months; he had lost all the high ground and the command of the air, which meant that his artillery observers were now at a great disadvantage. Since 1st July over 26,000 prisoners had been captured, and thirty-eight German divisions, the flower of the army, had been flung into the fray, only to be withdrawn broken and exhausted. Reserves had been used up in making counter-attacks which had cost the enemy dear, and had not held back the Allied advance for a single hour.

The British and French armies had fought gloriously; and our new divisions, called hastily from the mine, the shop, and



Pictorial Diagram of the Battlefield.

the office to the unaccustomed work of war, had shown the courage and discipline of professional soldiers. Given a fortnight or more of fair weather and it looked as though a broad breach would be made in the enemy's front, and his forces would be obliged to fall back everywhere to escape destruction. It was hoped that the "Picardy summer" of fair, bright days, with clear skies and solid ground underfoot, would continue, and that the promise of victory would speedily be fulfilled.

Alas ! the hope was vain. In the closing days of September drenching rains began to fall and gales began to blow. The battle-front became a quagmire dotted with sheets of water where formerly shell-holes had gaped. The foul weather continued until the end of October. The roads which led up to the new British position were bad at the best ; some of them were no better than country lanes. Along these roads an enormous traffic had to pass ; everything necessary for war and everything required for the feeding and clothing and comfort of hundreds of thousands of men had to be sent up to the front by an endless stream of motor lorries. There were only two good highways in all the district—the Albert-Bapaume road and the Albert-Peronne road. Both of these roads were broad, with easy gradients and good surfaces. But under the strain of the incessant traffic they were soon so badly worn that a journey along them in a motor car was like a trip on a switchback railway. If famous highways were in this condition, what was the state of the country lanes ? New roads were very hard to make, for the chalky soil had been churned up, and everywhere there were hollows and pits caused by bursting shells.

The shocking condition of the roads made the problem of supplying the army difficult in fine weather, but when the rain came the task was almost impossible. Every road became a water-course, and in the hollows the mud was up to a man's middle. It is said that an Australian, who was vainly endeavouring to get a cart and mule team along a flooded road, saw an officer of the Naval Division pass by, and said to his mate, " I do think one of those fellows might just sail a nice new Dreadnought up this road and give us a tow." Off the roads the ground was a squelching bog ; dug-outs crumbled in, and communication trenches were deep, muddy streams. No advance could be made across country in this sodden condition. So, while the rain continued, it was only possible to carry out small local operations for the purpose of removing the ragged edges and biting off the ugly little salients in our lines.

Before I describe these small but important gains I must try to give you a clear idea of the position of the German fourth line, against which our attacks were now to be directed. Let us suppose that we are walking along the ridge from Thiepval to Morval. We notice that a number of long spurs descend into the valley on the enemy's side, and that two of them are of special importance. Just west of Flers there is a spur shaped like a hammer-head, and at the western end of it, about three-quarters of a mile from Le Sars,* we see a hillock, which is really an ancient burial mound. It is called the Butte of

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* *Le Sar.*

Warlencourt, and it rises about fifty feet above the valley floor. To the right of it is the Albert-Bapaume road. About three-quarters of a mile nearer to us, and between us and the Butte, are the ruins of a French monastery known as Eaucourt-l'Abbaye.*

Now we walk along the high ground towards Morval, and see running north to the village of Thelloy another ridge which passes about a thousand yards to the east of Gueudecourt. Behind these two spurs was the German fourth position. For the most part it lay on the forward slopes, and therefore could not be directly seen from our lines, though we had a clear view of the ground beyond. The object of the small operations, which I shall briefly describe, was to carry the two spurs mentioned above, and thus get sufficiently near to assault the German fourth line. You must remember that though these spurs were not part of the German main front, their sunken roads and buildings and hollows were strongly held. Once we had captured them we could look down into the glen of the Ancre, and far over the uplands to the north and north-east.

If you turn to the diagram on pages 248–249 you will see in front of Le Sars the farm of Destremont, which was very gallantly captured on 29th September by a single company of a Northumbrian division. On 1st October the London Territorial Division, which had distinguished itself in the High Wood, advanced against Eaucourt-l'Abbaye. There was a double line of trenches with entanglements in front of the monastery, and in the ruins there were many machine guns. The Londoners charged through a beet field, and kicked the roots from one to the other as footballs. It was a queer kind of game to play on the way to a trench full of enemies; but it "kept us from worrying," said one of the players. "A little bit of sport helps one wonderfully."

The trenches were captured, and found to be full of dead; but our men were checked for a time by a redoubt. Two Tanks, however, came to the rescue, and the ruins were seized. The enemy did not show much fight, but made off to the rear. "There was one big whopper," said a small English boy, "and he was seven feet high, I should say, from the glance I had of him. Why, he could have eaten me for breakfast and then gone hungry! But he ran like a whippet on Bank Holiday. I didn't get a chance to close with him."

* *Oh-koor-lab-bay-ee.*

On the north side of the abbey our troops dug in, wet, cold, and hungry, with the rain falling heavily and their trench swamped. So terrible was the condition of the ground behind them that the carriers who were trying to bring up food for them became bogged. The Londoners would have starved but for the supplies sent to them by the troops on their right.

A strange incident happened during the night. A body of twenty Germans, with an officer and an under-officer, came strolling along, and took cover under a bank close to the abbey buildings. Our men crept out towards them with a machine gun, and twenty of them held up their hands while the officers made good their escape. It appeared that the captured men were part of a battalion sent up to relieve their comrades who were holding the outskirts of the abbey. They had lost their way, and were quite ignorant of the position of the British. In the course of the night other parties of Germans blundered into our trenches. Then our men telephoned back to the artillery, which flung out a curtain-fire, and caught more of the relief coming down from Warlencourt.

Some of the newcomers, however, managed to get through, and began bombing their way into the ruins of the abbey. One of our dumps of bombs exploded by accident, and our men could only reply with such bombs as they carried. For a time they were obliged to give way, but they never completely lost their hold of the buildings. The fight went on all night, and next morning our men received a fresh supply of bombs and some reinforcements. For the two following days they continued the struggle, not only above ground but in the vaults below, and by the evening of 3rd October the whole place was ours. On 6th October the heroic Londoners pushed forward, and won the ruined mill north-west of the abbey.

The next day was very cloudy and windy, but happily was free from rain. That day we made an attack on a front of 12,000 yards, while the French were busy on the left battering at Sailly. Our men floundered through the mud, and before long were coated from head to foot in slime. Nevertheless, they advanced very rapidly against the village of Le Sars, which you will see on the diagram in front of Destremont Farm. This village was defended on the right by a sort of quadrilateral known as the Tangle. In front of this obstacle our men lay wallowing in the mire waiting for a Tank to appear.

When it arrived it straddled across the trench and enfiladed it; but something went wrong with its works, and there it stayed.

The defenders of Le Sars made a stout stand, and there was some grim and bitter fighting before the survivors held up their hands. Before dusk the airmen hovering over the ruins were able to signal to headquarters that our infantry were well into the village, and were sending back batches of prisoners. Meanwhile to the east and west of the place good progress had been made, and by the end of the month our line ran much as it is shown by the dotted line on the diagram (pages 248–249).

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During the next month we struggled onwards towards Bapaume, but were not able to reach it. I should weary you very much, and you would not be greatly enlightened, if I were to tell you of the little encounters which took place. The gains which resulted look very small on the map, but you must remember that they were only won by a courage and hardihood that was truly heroic. For weeks together men fought in slimy pits up to their waists in water, and frequently were very hungry, for the work of bringing up supplies was terribly difficult.

We strove hard to capture the Butte of Warlencourt, upon which our guns played ceaselessly until it was flattened out. On 5th November we were over its site, and had dug in on the farther side; but the Germans launched against us a division of their Guards, who had just come fresh into the fight. We were forced back to our old lines, and this was the one successful counterstroke made by the enemy between the beginning of September and the close of the year 1916.

* * * * * * *

While the fighting just described was going on, we were making a big effort to master the Thiepval ridge completely. I have already told you how we won the village. By the end of September two strong redoubts north-east of it had been captured, and only the north-west corner of a third redoubt was in the enemy's hands. It had been severely pounded by our guns since 1st July, but it still remained the pivot of the whole German line. The trenches known as Stuff and Regina, which ran from the redoubt eastward for some 5,000 yards, was still largely in possession of the enemy, and from these trenches he had delivered counter-attack after counter-

Germans surrendering at Thiepval.

(*From the picture by A. Forestier. By permission of The Illustrated London News.*)

attack against our front, but every time had been beaten back with heavy loss.

German marines from the Yser held the position, and it must be confessed that they fought with great stubbornness. The German High Command knew that at all costs their foothold must be maintained, for if they lost it all chance of driving us from the ridge would be gone. A captured German order put the matter very bluntly : "If the enemy remains on the ridge he can blow our artillery in the Ancre valley to pieces, and the protection of the infantry will then be destroyed."

Between the 20th and 23rd October there was a brief spell of fine weather. A frost at night and a strong easterly wind by day dried the ground, and the enemy was quick to take advantage of the change. Early in the morning of Saturday, 21st October, he made a big effort to drive us out of the Schwaben redoubt, which, you will remember, was almost wholly in our hands. Our guns were ready, and all the waves of advancing men, except two, were broken up by our fire before they reached our lines. At two points the Germans managed to get into our trenches, but their stay was very brief. They were at once driven out, leaving prisoners in our hands.

It was fortunate for us that the enemy made his attack first, for our men were then ready to advance, and they had now hit the Germans hard. Shortly after noon men of the New Army on the left and centre, and Canadians on the right, attacked the whole length of the Regina and Stuff trenches in splendid fashion. The trenches were carried, and we pushed our advanced posts forward until we were on the crown of the ridge between the Upper Ancre and Courcelette. In the course of the day we took nearly 1,100 prisoners, at a cost of 1,200 casualties, many of which were very slight. During the course of this battle our men were seen at their very best.

Only one small section of the ridge remained in the enemy's hands, and on the night of 10th November we dislodged him from it, and thus rounded off our gains. We were now in command of the upper valley of the Ancre and of the uplands lying behind the as-yet-unbroken first line of the Germans from Beaumont Hamel to Serre. The story of how we captured, in the most daring fashion, the immensely strong positions between these two places must be left to our next chapter.

* * * * * * *

Before I conclude this section of the fighting, I must tell you what progress the French had made on our right during the month of October. I wish I had space in which to tell you the story fully, for it is full of heroism. You will remember that General Foch's forces were to work along with the British and to capture Sailly and Mont St. Quentin, the key to Peronne on the north. In order to follow the fighting you must look carefully at the map on page 63. On 8th October the French made a splendid advance up the slopes of Sailly, and reached a point only about two hundred yards from the northern part of the village. At the same time they advanced south of the Somme, and by 15th October drew near to the ridge which you see running parallel with the south-to-north course of the Somme. Next day they were in Sailly, though the eastern half of the village still remained in the hands of the Germans, who defended themselves by using liquid fire and every device known to them. At the end of the month our Allies were still in the western half of the village.

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Despite the bad weather, the Allies had not done badly during the month of October. They had broken into the fourth German position at one point, and they had added to their roll of prisoners 10,000 men. Between 1st July and the end of October we and the French had taken 1,469 officers and 71,532 of other ranks, as well as 173 field guns, 130 heavy pieces, 215 trench mortars, and 988 machine guns. It was probable that the enemy had lost close on half a million men during the four months' fighting.

Letters and papers captured from the Germans showed clearly that officers and men alike had suffered great strain. There was no doubt that their spirit was giving way, and that our artillery and our aircraft were superior to theirs. But in spite of all this they remained very strong, and it was evident that we had still to strike many heavy blows before they were ready to own themselves beaten.

CHAPTER XXIV.

HOW WE TOOK BEAUMONT HAMEL.

MANY times in the course of these pages you have heard of the river Ancre, that small feeder of the Somme which is now better known throughout the world than some of the lordly rivers which open up the hearts of continents. Look at the map and follow its course. It rises at the foot of a spur south of Bapaume, and as a small and easily-crossed stream wanders westward for six or seven miles. Near Miraumont * it begins to swing round to the south, and continues in this direction to Albert. From Albert to Miraumont a road and a railway follow the right bank of the river. The fact that they cling closely to the right bank of the river shows you at once that the ground to the west is high and irregular. Roads and railways nearly always follow the line of least difficulty.

About five miles to the north of Albert is the little village of Hamel. If you were to stand on the bridge which crosses the river near Hamel, you would notice that on both sides of the stream the banks rise to hills, though further up you would see that they sink again and that the water spreads out in floods. In the bad old days, during the wars of religion, when men persecuted and killed each other for the glory of God, caves were dug in the high banks of the river, so that those who were in peril of their lives might have a place of refuge. When the Germans first took up their positions on the banks of the Ancre, they discovered these underground refuges, and proceeded to improve upon them in the most remarkable fashion.

During the Somme battles there were four curious openings in the hillside on the left bank of the river. These openings gave access to a vast underground fortress. The workings

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* *Me-roe-mon* (*n* nasal).

were pushed into the hillside for a distance of five hundred yards, at the end of which there was a cross-tunnel forming the shape of the letter T. From each arm of the T there were offshoots containing room after room. The whole place was an enormous shelter for men and arms and stores. It was ventilated by shafts and tunnels, which ran up into the lines of trenches. When the front line of trenches was shelled, the defenders slipped down the tunnels and popped up again in the second or third line, from which they poured a deadly machine-gun fire on the infantry advancing against them.

About a mile and a half to the north of Hamel stands the larger village of Beaumont Hamel. Between the two villages rises a hill. If we wished to get from one village to the other we should have a choice of two routes. We might follow the gorge that strikes west from Hamel between the hills until we came to a ravine on our right hand. This ravine, from its shape, was known to our soldiers as Y Ravine. It is a great gash in the hill, and at its western end is thirty feet or more in depth ; the sides are so steep that in places they overhang. If we were to push up this Y Ravine we should find ourselves on the top of the hill, and a short walk would bring us to Beaumont Hamel. Or we might follow the road along the river bank under the eastern face of the hill till we came to Beaumont Hamel station, where we should find a direct road striking westward past a quarry and climbing up the hillside to our destination (see pages 260–261).

On the hill between Hamel and Beaumont Hamel the Germans had made a perfect maze of trenches, dotted with redoubts and protected by row after row of barbed-wire entanglements, which from our front line looked like a solid wall of red rust. Y Ravine, which had its prongs towards the gorge to the west of Hamel, was a perfect death-trap ; it was commanded on both sides by scores of machine guns, and there were many deep dug-outs in its sides.

At the head of Y Ravine the Germans had created another underground fortress, the whole forming a kind of village beneath the earth, so extensive that whole battalions could be assembled in it. All along the banks of the Ancre, on both sides of the stream—at St. Pierre Divion * on the left bank, at Beaucourt on the right bank, and at other places—there

* *San Pe-air De-ve-ong* (*n* nasal).

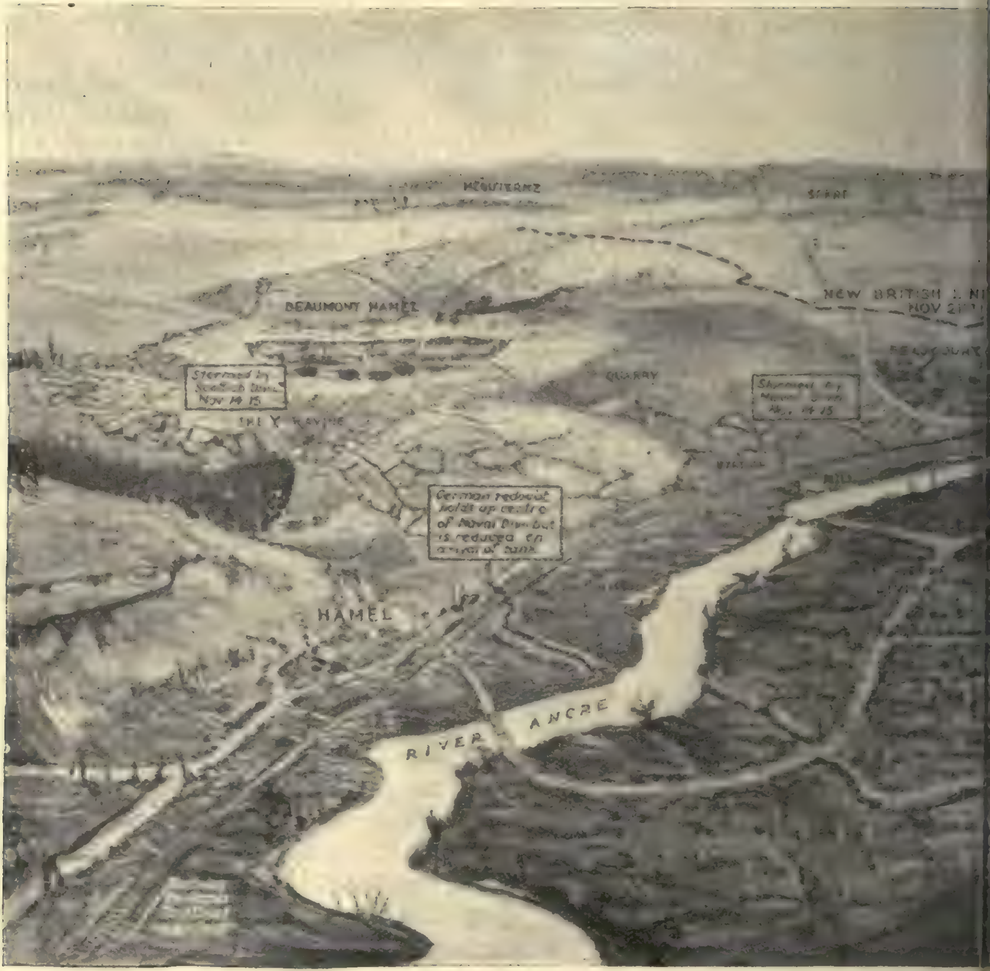
were fortresses of this type. On the fortification of these positions the Germans had worked hard for two years.

You have not forgotten, I am sure, July 1, 1916, the opening day of our great offensive on the Somme. You will remember that while we won splendid successes east of the Ancre, we failed to make any lasting impression on the positions to the west of that river. For four months we continued to strike deep into the heart of the German defences between the Ancre and the Somme, but we made no big attempt to carry the positions to the west of the Ancre. All the while the Germans were strengthening and improving their defences in this part of the line, until it seemed that they meant to hold them for ever.

On 9th November the long-continued bad weather took a turn for the better, and thereafter remained dry and cold, with frosty nights and misty mornings. Sir Douglas Haig now determined to make a bold bid for the tremendously difficult series of positions which I have described. Perhaps you think it was a desperate thing to do so late in the year. But we had learned much since 1st July, and we now had real advantages which we did not possess at the beginning of the struggle. Let me tell you what some of these advantages were.

First of all, we were now using our artillery in quite a new way. Formerly we used to pour a torrent of shell-fire on the trenches which we were about to attack, and destroy them altogether. Then our infantry advanced, occupied the destroyed trenches, and laboured furiously to make them defensible. We no longer proceeded in this manner. We had now so many guns and such vast supplies of ammunition, and our artillerymen had grown so proficient, that we were able to not only destroy the enemy's trenches by gun-fire, but at the same time protect our infantry as they advanced. When they left their trenches the guns created a curtain-fire in front of them. As they advanced, so did the curtain-fire. It crept forward at the same rate as the men, and protected them to a great extent from the machine guns and snipers hidden in the shell-holes. Further, the curtain fire showed the way to the infantry, and helped them to keep the proper line of advance.

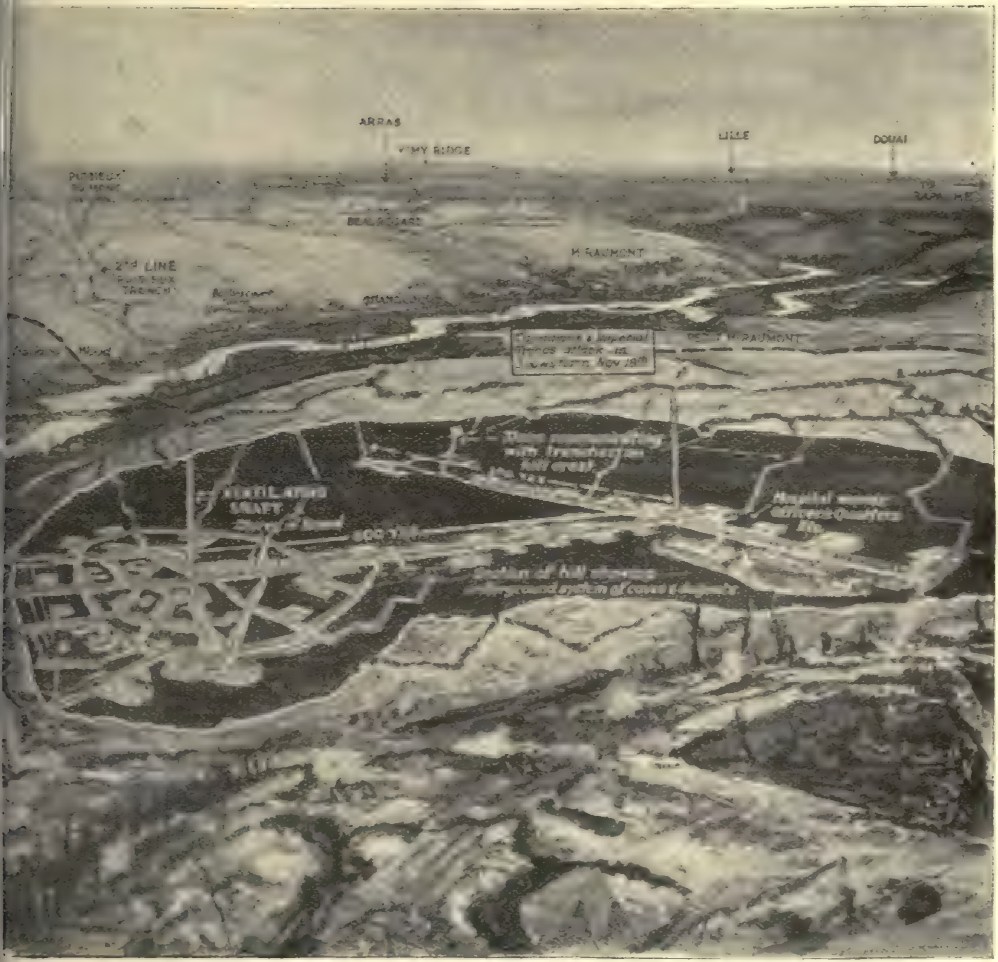
Another advantage which we now possessed was that we were in command of the whole Thiepval ridge, and thus we outflanked the German front on the other side of the Ancre.



Bird's-eye View of the Ancre Valley looking towards the North-east

In July the enemy had only to direct the fire of his guns against attacks coming from the west. Now he was facing south, and had to protect himself not only in this direction, but also on his eastward side. If, therefore, we decided to attack again from the west, the enemy guns would have to fight on two fronts. In July he had been fighting on a straight line; now he was holding a salient.

There were still other reasons why Sir Douglas Haig decided to make an assault in November. Our Fourth Army had made



showing the Underground Refuges captured from the Germans.

but slow progress during October, and the enemy had come to the conclusion that our offensive was drawing to a close. He thought that after our great efforts of the summer it was impossible for us to put up another big fight in the late autumn. He was therefore a little off his guard, and was devoting his energies to the task of making himself comfortable during the rapidly approaching winter. Finally, Sir Douglas Haig knew that the ground across which he proposed to advance was in a much better state than that on which we had been fighting so long. Between our old front line and the positions we were about to attack the ground was not deeply pitted with shell-craters, nor were the roads ploughed up by four months of traffic.

On Sunday, 12th November, Sir Herbert Gough's Fifth Army held the line from Gommecourt in the north to the Albert-Bapaume road. Look carefully at the map and find Serre,* about three miles south of Gommecourt. Opposite Serre, and extending south to a point just north of Beaumont Hamel, lay two divisions of the old Regulars, comprising some battalions which had fought right through the campaign since Mons. Facing Beaumont Hamel was the Highland Territorial Division, which had been more than eighteen months in France, and at the end of July and the beginning of August had spent seventeen terrible days in the High Wood. On their right, just south of Y Ravine, and extending to the Ancre, was a Naval Division, which had received its baptism of fire at Antwerp in the early days of the war, had fought gallantly at Gallipoli, and was now about to go into action on the Western front for the first time. Across the river lay two divisions of the New Army.

On the morning of Saturday, 11th November, our guns from the Thiepval ridge began a heavy bombardment for the purpose of destroying the enemy's wire and parapets. All Sunday the firing continued; but as the hour of attack approached it did not increase to a hurricane, because we did not intend to give the enemy any warning that we were about to leave our trenches. At 5.45 next morning (13th November), in the still, black darkness, while a raw, heavy mist overhung hill and plain, and the air was bitterly cold, our men went over the parapets. While our guns still played on the enemy's trenches, and smoke and sudden flame were leaping up from them, a creeping curtain-fire was begun. A wall of shells walked over the ground with giant strides, and behind it went our men.

On our left wing at Serre we failed, as we had done on 1st July; but on the right, south of the Ancre, where our assault was directed northward against the enemy's trenches on the northern slopes of the Thiepval ridge, it met with a remarkably rapid success. By 7.20 all the enemy positions east of St. Pierre Divion were in our hands, and the Germans in and

* *Sair.*

about that hamlet were hemmed in between our troops and the river. The division of the New Army which made this advance captured 1,400 prisoners at a cost of less than six hundred casualties. It is said that at one moment the number of prisoners was actually greater than the number of attackers. By evening our troops were holding a line from the Thiepval ridge to the banks of the river.

The great interest of the day's fighting, however, attaches to the two central divisions whose business it was to capture the great stronghold of Beaumont Hamel—one of the hardest tasks ever set to any troops. Before they could reach the village they had to carry a strong redoubt and push up the Y Ravine, in the steep honeycombed sides of which were machine guns innumerable. The whole uplift of land between Hamel and Beaumont Hamel was so tunnelled that the Germans could send reinforcements to any threatened point under the safest of cover.

We will now follow the Highland Division in its remarkable advance. About six in the morning, while it was so dark that they had difficulty in keeping touch and direction, the Highlanders pushed forward, with the Naval Division keeping step with them on their right. On the north side of Y Ravine they broke through the first and second lines of trenches fairly easily, but had to fight fiercely in all sorts of scattered positions and among shell-holes before the third line was reached. South of the ravine equally good progress was made, and our men pushed along both edges of the prong of the Y, bombing as they went. At the fork of the Y they managed to make a breach in the enemy's line; and then, bayonet in hand, clambered down the precipitous sides, and in the chasm found themselves amidst a horde of Germans. Then followed a desperate struggle.* The Germans fought stubbornly, and everywhere there were bombing and bayoneting encounters, and fierce struggles in which men flung aside their weapons and grappled at each other's throats.

About midday the eastern part of the ravine was full of our men, who were not only holding their own, but were slowly forcing the enemy back towards the gorge. Early in the afternoon we launched another attack from the west, and the Germans in the prongs of the Y found themselves attacked in

* See illustration, p. 274.

Between two Barrages: British and German Infantry

(*From the picture by John Bryan. By per*

fighting for a Trench above Beaumont Hamel.

mission of The Illustrated London News.)

front and in rear. As they turned to repel the new frontal attack our men in the ravine surged forward behind them, and, first one by one and then in batches, they threw down their arms and surrendered.

Then the work of cleaning out the burrows began. Our bombardment had smashed in the mouths of the dug-outs, and the openings were very difficult to discover. As soon as they were found, our men, armed with bombs, pushed into them, and many weird and wonderful combats took place underground. The very strength and depth of the defences proved a snare to the Germans: once the openings were blocked up by the havoc of the guns, the inmates were trapped.

The experience of one Scottish officer and two privates will serve as an example of the sort of thing that went on during the confused fighting in the Y Ravine. The officer and his comrades came to the opening of a deep dug-out far up the ravine. Stationing his men as guards at the mouth of the underground chamber, he descended into the darkness alone, and called upon the occupants to surrender. His electric torch shone on the faces of a captain of Uhlans and several other officers who were standing around the mirror of a periscope which reflected the ground about them. "I suppose we must surrender," said the Uhlan. "Will you permit us to get our packs?"

The Scottish officer agreed, and one of the Germans went into an inner chamber. Then the captain of Uhlans, still gazing into the mirror of the periscope, suddenly exclaimed: "You appear to be alone. I am not so sure that we are your prisoners: I think you are ours." "That may be," said the Scot. Then there was a pause, Scot and German alike devoutly hoping that his own troops would arrive. Suddenly the watcher at the periscope saw flashing across the mirror the figures of men wearing British uniforms. He turned to the British officer, and said: "There appear to be Scottish troops all around us, so perhaps we had better stick to the original arrangement. We are at your service."

When the ravine had been cleared of all "pockets" of Germans, the Scotsmen, to their great delight, found enormous stores of food in some of the burrows. In one hiding-place they found tinned ham, cheese, bread, soda-water, cigars, sausages, and tongues—welcome fare for hungry men who had been fighting from early morning. " Mon," said one Scotsman, " it's no a dug-out ; it's a shop." The captors made a hearty meal, and then solaced themselves with German cigars.

While the struggle for the ravine was going on, other Scottish troops higher up had swarmed over the German lines and into the dip of the hill where Beaumont Hamel lies—or, rather, used to lie, for by this time it was nothing but a huddle of broken-down brickwork. Before midday we were in possession of the site of the village, and were holding the mouths of the hiding-places which underlay it. Then the work of routing out the Germans began. By evening the whole place was in our hands, and we had captured over 1,400 prisoners and between fifty and sixty machine guns. The Highland Territorials, by sheer hand-to-hand fighting, had stormed and won perhaps the strongest German stronghold on the Western front.

Before I pass on, let me relate very briefly the adventure of a member of the signal corps, whose duty it was to run telephone wires up to the front during the advance. He had just reached the mouth of a German dug-out when he was hit, and fell. At that moment a German officer came up from the depths below, and " Signals " could see that there were other men behind him. He pulled himself together, and called on the officer to surrender. He did so, and then the signaller calmly telephoned back over the line for an escort to take his prisoners to the rear. He stood guard over the Germans in the doorway, and thus prevented the others from coming out until help arrived.

A correspondent who lunched a week or so later in the caves of Beaumont Hamel thus describes them :—

> " Behind the door in the wooden wall were steps leading below. At the bottom was a long corridor lined with stout planks. The roof was supported at intervals by plank pillars. All was pitch dark until my guide struck a match and lighted a series of candles that were projecting from the wall on pegs stuck between the planks. Burning still and erect they shed a yellow light on the low beds with dark coverings, camp washing-basins of pale green canvas, kit bags, and such things. Evidently the men slept in the passage. The colonel's room was farther along—a handsome little apartment by comparison, and already lighted. The walls had been panelled by some industrious German hand in quite a pleasing design . . . Soon we came to a stout door, bolted. I asked where it led to, and my guide replied, ' To the neighbouring dug-out.'
>
> " It seems that all Beaumont Hamel was thus linked up underground. Tunnel leading to tunnel had made one vast underground warren under-

lying the whole village. Hundreds of people might live here below ground. Bedrooms, living-rooms, kitchens, store-rooms, and armament-rooms—all were provided. The Germans must have spent days and days in completing that wonderful system. Even the timber used represents hundreds of loads, all of which had to be brought from afar. In places the links between the systems had been stove in by our gun-fire, and to get from working to working the enemy must have emerged into the open air and crawled over holes and mounds tossed up by our shells.

"You can find no sign now of a street or road running through Beaumont Hamel, so thorough has been the work of our guns. You can guess where the High Street ran by a heap of white, powdered stone. That was once the village church."

We must now learn how the Naval Division fared. Its business was to carry the village of Beaucourt, which you see by the riverside about a mile and a half north of Hamel. The naval men had to attack over the ground which had been partly covered by the Ulster Brigade on 1st July; but while the Ulstermen had to advance some five hundred to seven hundred yards to get at the German front, the sailors had dug advanced trenches, and were not more than two hundred and fifty yards from the enemy. The wave of assault carried them over the first two German lines of trenches, and for a moment it seemed that they would reach their goal without a check. But on the hillside above Hamel they found their way blocked by a German redoubt strongly held with machine guns. All day they strove to carry it, but in vain. Various detachments managed to push forward—one of them with remarkable success—but it was clear that no general advance could be made until the redoubt was captured.

That night two Tanks arrived, and one of them waddled up to the redoubt well within range. Then the garrison hoisted the white flag, and the way was clear for a general advance. Next morning (14th November) a brigade of another division was brought up in support, and once more our men went ahead. Some of them, however, lost direction; but the remainder pushed on, and cleared the ground between the Beaumont Hamel station and the trench defending Beaucourt. While they were thus engaged, the startling news arrived that Beaucourt had been carried by storm. The hero of this exploit was Lieutenant-Colonel Freyberg, a young New Zealander, whose battalion on the right had gone clean through the German positions, and had reached the Beaucourt trench, where it lay under the enemy's fire for twenty-four hours before our curtain-fire lifted, and it was able to break into the village. I shall tell you the full story of this gallant officer's achievement in a later chapter, when I deal with the heroes who received the Victoria Cross during the battles of the autumn and winter.

By the night of Tuesday, 14th November, we had captured well over five thousand prisoners, the largest number of men which had so far been taken in one engagement on the Western front. The advance, however, was not yet over. On the 15th the Germans made a counter-attack; but it availed them nothing, and in the Beaucourt section we pushed steadily on. On the 16th and 17th we again advanced, and slowly but surely won ground.

For some three days past the thermometer had been below freezing-point; the puddles were now frozen over, and the surface of the roads was ringing hard. In the darkness of the early morning of 18th November the snow began to fall, and soon the whole countryside was covered with a blanket of snow. Just as the falling snow turned into icy sleet, the Canadians and other Imperial troops began a memorable advance—the last important attack of the year 1916.

You have already heard of the Stuff and Regina trenches, which we had captured on the Thiepval ridge. It was from these trenches that the Canadians swept forward towards the river amidst the shell bursts and the driving sleet. For two miles they advanced in the darkness. In some places there was savage hand-to-hand fighting, and before the day was over the Canadians were far down the slopes towards the river. Meanwhile our troops on the other side of the stream had moved forward, and by 21st November our new line ran as you see it marked on the diagram (pages 264-265).

With this engagement on the Ancre the fourth stage of the Battle of the Somme came to a close. "We had secured," says Sir Douglas Haig, "the command of the Ancre valley on both banks of the river at the point where it entered the enemy's lines, and without great cost to ourselves had inflicted losses on him which he himself admitted to be considerable." We had won three strongly fortified villages, and our front was now far down the slopes from the Thiepval ridge, and north and west of Grandcourt. We had captured over 7,200 prisoners, together with vast quantities of material, including several hundred machine guns. We had taught the enemy that our offensive was far from spent, and that only the worst of weather conditions could prevent us from waging the struggle with all the vigour which we displayed on 1st July.

* * * * * * *

And now while winter—the third winter of the war—descends upon the field of battle, and friend and foe are forced to cease their strife in order to protect themselves against the elements, let us briefly consider how far the objects of the Big Push had been attained. You will remember that the first object we had in view was to draw off pressure from the sorely assailed French at Verdun. This we had done, and, in Sir Douglas Haig's opinion, our success in this respect was quite enough to justify the whole offensive. Not only so, but, as we shall read in a later chapter, we enabled General Nivelle to advance and recover most of the positions which the Germans had only won at a terrible cost. Had Verdun fallen, all would not have been lost; but its capture would certainly have put new heart into the enemy, and would have shaken the faith of many in our hopes of success. The failure of the enemy to capture the town greatly lowered his credit in the eyes of neutrals, and his heavy losses sent a thrill of horror through Germany.

Our second object was to hold the main German forces to the Western front, and prevent their High Command from sending reinforcements against the Russians. This, too, had been accomplished. In June, when the Russians were winning splendid successes, the Germans began to send divisions to the East. When they decided to invade Rumania they had to scrape troops together from all quarters, yet all the while they had to maintain and continually increase their forces on the Western front. Had the Somme offensive never taken place, the Russians in the East might have had to meet overwhelming armies from the West.

Our third object was to wear down the enemy's strength. This we had certainly done. There is no doubt that the enemy's losses in men and material had been much greater than those of the Allies. We had drawn into the battle much of the enemy's surplus of men, and we had struck a shattering blow at the great military machine in which he trusted. For two years he had held the upper hand, and at Ypres and in the

Artois had been able to subject our men to the horrors of a shell-fire against which we could only make a feeble reply. Now the shoe was on the other foot. The Germans had learnt what it meant to cling to shell-holes and ruined trenches under the hail of a pitiless bombardment. It was a new experience for them, and it took the heart out of their men.

Nevertheless, as Sir Douglas Haig frankly tells us in his dispatch, the enemy's power had not yet been broken, and no man could say how long the struggle would continue. But that the Allies would be victorious in the end—however long the struggle might rage—was now certain. They had inflicted defeat after defeat upon the German armies—the mainstay of the Central Powers—and had done so while the enemy was fighting in the strongest fortifications which art and labour could create. Though bad weather had given the Germans a respite, there were many thousands of them who now knew that there they could never again resist as they had done in the past, and that Germany's doom was only a matter of time. Their leaders, however, were determined to leave no stone unturned to stave off defeat. They made sweeping changes in their High Command ; they " combed out " every possible man from industrial employments, and they put into the field all who could carry arms. They reorganized their forces very cleverly ; but, when all was said and done, they could not add much more than 100,000 men to their waning strength.

There is no doubt that the Battle of the Somme taxed the German army and the German people to the uttermost. Their newspapers tried to pooh-pooh the whole affair, and made but brief mention of the battles in which their strength was drained away. But in tens of thousands of German homes the bitter truth was known, and no stories of easy successes on the Danube could allay the chilling fear that with the spring offensive would come ruin. Nevertheless, the Kaiser and his ministers made a great effort. They enlisted the whole manhood of the nation ; they organized the food supplies, and urged the people to sustain life and hope on short commons. Meanwhile they sent out their submarines to attack our food ships, in the vain hope of reducing us to similar straits.

By this time the Germans had fully recognized that Britain was their real enemy, and that she had set her face sternly to the task of breaking the military power of Prussia. " She has gone so far," said one newspaper, " as to introduce compulsory service to attain her end. . . . There is no doubt as to her having the money necessary, and we should be foolish to believe that the terrible fighting on the Western front will not start again next spring." Other newspapers said that Britain's immense labour resources had " enabled her to set enormous weapons against us. It is the Battle of the Somme above all that teaches us this."

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I cannot do better than conclude my account of the Somme battles during the year 1916 by quoting the words with which Sir Douglas Haig brings his dispatch to a close :—

" Our new armies entered the battle with the determination to win, and with confidence in their power to do so. They have proved to themselves, to the enemy, and to the world that this confidence was justified, and in the fierce struggle they have been through they have learned many valuable lessons which will help them in the future."

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Thus, amidst the awful bloodshed and slaughter of the Picardy fighting, it was the splendid courage and fortitude of our new armies which shone forth like a meteor in the sky. For the first time in our long history the British nation was in arms. It was men bred to the labour of field, factory, mine, and office who won the victories which I have described—men who had freely offered themselves to fight Britain's battles in the day of Britain's need. They were the very flower of the nation's manhood. Thousands of men fell, and thousands more returned from the fray with maimed bodies and enfeebled frames. Few were the families that had not cause to mourn their brightest and best cut off in their prime, or doomed to a life of burden and suffering. But while grief was widespread, the mourners cherished a proud sorrow. Fathers, sons, and brothers had given their lives to save the land of their birth and pride from a tyranny worse than death, and who could wish their best beloved a nobler end ?

CHAPTER XXV.

HEROES OF THE VICTORIA CROSS.—I.

BETWEEN 27th September and the close of the year 1916 more than thirty Victoria Crosses were awarded for deeds of outstanding bravery. Most of these emblems of valour were won in Picardy during the course of the fighting which I have described in preceding chapters. You will read with the deepest interest the stories of the men thus honoured, not only because they are records of that courage which recks not of life or limb when duty must be done, but because they give you an excellent idea of the character of the warfare waged by the British forces when they were biting deeper and deeper into the German positions between the Ancre and the Somme. You will be distressed to notice that many of the Victoria Cross heroes mentioned in this and the following chapter did not live to wear the coveted decoration.

The first name on our list is that of

SECOND-LIEUTENANT EDWARD FELIX BAXTER, Liverpool Regiment.

You know that before a raid can be successfully made on the opposite trenches their barbed-wire entanglements must be cut, so that the raiders will not be held up and exposed to the fire of the enemy. In the case of a general attack this is usually done by the big guns; but in the case of a raid, when secrecy is all-important, it must be done by devoted men, who crawl out into No Man's Land in the darkness of night, and do the work almost under the very noses of the enemy. For two nights before a raid Lieutenant Baxter was in command of a party thus engaged. He was so near to the enemy's parapet that he could hear the Germans talking. In his hand he held a bomb with the pin withdrawn, so that it could be

Scots fighting their Way up the Slopes of Y Ravine.

(By permission of The Illustrated London News.)

thrown at a moment's notice. Unfortunately, the bomb slipped to the ground. Had it exploded, he and his comrades would have been killed or wounded, and the enemy warned of what was on foot. Immediately, however, he picked up the bomb, unscrewed the base-plug, and took out the detonator, which he smothered in the ground. This daring act undoubtedly saved many lives, and by preventing the enemy from being alarmed made the raid possible.

When the raid took place Lieutenant Baxter led the left storming-party with the utmost gallantry, and was the first man to spring into the enemy's trench. He shot the sentry with his revolver, and then helped to bomb the dug-outs. When it was time to return he helped his men over the parapet, and, when the last of them was safe in No Man's Land, climbed over himself. He was never seen again, though search-parties went out several times to look for him. He had sacrificed his life for the safety of his men.

Captain Eric Norman Frankland Bell, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers.

Captain Bell was in command of a trench-mortar battery, but when his comrades advanced he went forward with them. When the front line was held up by the enfilading fire of a machine gun, he crept forward and shot the machine gunner. While our bombing-parties were clearing the enemy's trenches they were checked three times. Each time Captain Bell pushed ahead, all alone, and flung trench-mortar bombs among the enemy. When he had no more bombs to throw, he stood on the parapet, under intense fire, and plied a rifle with great coolness and effect as the Germans advanced to the counter-attack. Finally, he rallied and reorganized bodies of infantry which had lost their officers, and while doing so fell mortally wounded. You must remember that Captain Bell was not required to advance with his comrades. His work was to direct the fire of his battery in the trenches. His zeal, however, would not permit him to remain behind while his comrades were struggling forward. He knew that he was wanted in the thick of the fray, and he was quite ready to sacrifice himself if by so doing some advantage could be won.

Captain Angus Buchanan, South Wales Borderers.

Over and over again in these pages you have read of soldiers who gladly risked their lives to save wounded men exposed to the enemy's fire. Captain Angus Buchanan, whose name suggests a Scottish rather than a Welsh regiment, saw two men go out to succour a wounded officer lying in the open. One of the men was immediately hit, and the other could not bring in the sufferer alone. Immediately Captain Buchanan went out under a rain of machine-gun bullets, and, with the help of the other man, carried the wounded officer into cover. He then returned, once more under heavy fire, and brought in the man who had fallen while attempting to rescue the wounded officer. Such courage as he displayed is the highest type of heroism.

SECOND-LIEUTENANT EDGAR KINGHORN MYLES, Welsh Rifles.

Lieutenant Myles won his Cross for similar gallantry in life-saving. On several occasions he went out in front of our advanced trenches under heavy rifle-fire, and at great personal risk assisted wounded men lying in the open. At a time when it seemed that certain death would be the lot of any one who ventured into No Man's land, he crawled out and brought in a wounded officer.

LIEUTENANT THOMAS ORDE LAWDER WILKINSON, Loyal North Lancashire Regiment.

Lieutenant Wilkinson was an old Wellington College boy, who had been senior prefect in his day, and had represented his school on three occasions in the Public Schools Boxing Competition. He was living with his parents on Vancouver Island when war broke out, and immediately enlisted, and came to England with the first Canadian contingent. In January 1915 he was given a commission in the Loyal North Lancashires, and went to the front with his regiment in the following July. During an attack a party belonging to another unit began to retire, leaving their machine gun behind. Lieutenant Wilkinson at once rushed forward with two of his men, recovered the gun, and getting it into working order, held up the enemy until reinforcements arrived. Later, when our advance was checked, he pushed ahead, and discovered that four or five men had been stopped by a solid bank of earth, over which the Germans were throwing bombs. With great pluck he mounted a machine gun on the top of this bank, and drove off the enemy bombers. Shortly afterwards he made two most gallant attempts to bring in a poor fellow lying in the open. On his second venture he was shot through the heart just before reaching the man. "Throughout the day," says the official record, "he set a magnificent example of courage and self-sacrifice." He was only twenty-two years of age when he died on the field of honour.

SERGEANT CLAUDE CHARLES CASTLETON, Australian Machine-Gun Company.

Suddenly, as our men advanced towards the enemy's trenches, a furious machine-gun fire burst upon them. For a time they were forced back, leaving many wounded in the shell-holes of No Man's Land. Twice Sergeant Castleton ventured out into the hail of bullets, and each time he brought in a wounded man on his back. He ventured out a third time, and was carrying in another man, when he was shot, and fell dead. "He saved others; himself he could not save."

CORPORAL JOSEPH DAVIES, Royal Welsh Fusiliers.

Corporal Davies had proved himself a gallant soldier on several occasions before the day on which he won his Cross. He had fought very gallantly at the Second Battle of Ypres, in which he had been badly wounded. During the Somme offensive, when we were attacking a certain wood, he and eight comrades became separated from the rest of their company. The enemy surged forward, and completely surrounded the little party; but Corporal Davies got his men into a shell-hole, and by bombing and opening rapid rifle fire managed to drive them off. Not content with routing the enemy, he and his comrades followed them up, and bayoneted several of them. Corporal Davies well deserved the compliment King Harry* paid to another gallant Welshman: "I do know Fluellen valiant."

CORPORAL SIDNEY WILLIAM WARE, Seaforth Highlanders.

During a day of very fierce fighting Corporal Ware distinguished himself by his cool gallantry, and was one of the few men in his unit who remained unwounded. When the order was given to fall back to the cover of a communication trench, he determined that he would not leave his stricken comrades behind. So he picked up a wounded man, carried him some two hundred yards to safety, and then returned for others, moving to and fro under very heavy fire for more than two hours. He did not cease his merciful labours until every wounded man had been brought in. Then he collapsed, having devoted all his strength to the saving of his fellows.

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* See Shakespeare's *Henry V.*, Act IV., Scene vii.

PRIVATE JAMES HENRY FYNN, South Wales Borderers.

Private Fynn was a native of Bodmin, and at the time when he won the Victoria Cross his father and his brother were also serving with the forces. After a night attack he was one of a small party which dug in beyond our advanced line only some three hundred yards from the enemy's trenches. Seeing several wounded men lying in front of his position, he ran out several times, in spite of the heavy fire, and bandaged them. He then went back to our advanced trench for a stretcher, and being unable to procure one, carried a badly wounded man on his back into safety. Again he returned, and aided by a comrade who was hit while engaged in the merciful task, carried in a second man. Only by a miracle did Private Fynn escape, so fierce was the fire that continually assailed him. An officer of his regiment said, " My first sight of him was when he was running across the open under heavy fire. Bullets were as thick as bees round an overturned hive. He crossed and recrossed with materials to dress the wounds of the men whom he went to assist. He could not bear to see the wounded left untended." Never was Victoria Cross more nobly won.

PRIVATE ALBERT HILL, Royal Welsh Fusiliers.

The exploits of Private Hill were sufficient to win him the Victoria Cross half a dozen times. He was a young Cheshire lad, who only stood 5 feet 3 inches; but he was packed full of pluck, and he is said to have killed twenty Germans during one hour of a single day. When his battalion deployed in a wood under heavy fire, and the order " Charge ! " was given, he dashed forward, and in a few moments met two Germans, both of whom he bayoneted. He was then sent forward by the sergeant of his platoon to get into touch with the company, and while doing so was cut off and surrounded by twenty of the enemy. Instead of holding up his hands, he attacked them with bombs, and killed eighteen of them. He then joined his sergeant, and the pair fought their way back to our lines. As soon as he reached the trench he heard that his captain and a scout were lying out wounded. Off he went and brought in the officer, while two comrades rescued the scout. Finally, to end a " crowded hour of glorious life," he captured and brought in two prisoners. I think you can picture the welcome that was given to him when he reached Denton, his native town. Thousands of people awaited his coming, and sang, " See the Conquering Hero Comes," as he stepped out of the train. He was received by the Mayor at the Town Hall, and carried shoulder high to his home, where his aged mother was waiting for him. There must have been scores of lads in the crowd that day who made up their minds that, if ever the chance should come, they would emulate the heroism of Private Albert Hill. He was described as " the youngest and smallest V.C. in the world."

NAIK SHAHAMAD KHAN, Punjabis.

After a long pause, an Indian again makes his appearance in our roll of heroes. When you have read Naik Shahamad Khan's story, I am sure you will agree that few more persistent and determined soldiers ever fought in any battle. He was in charge of a machine gun which was in an exposed position within 150 yards of the enemy. His business was to cover a gap in our new line. Three times parties of the enemy advanced against the gap, and three times the Naik drove them back. He had only two belt-fillers to help him ; the rest of the gun team had been shot down. For three hours he held the gap under very heavy fire, while his comrades laboured to make the position secure. At last the gun was knocked out by enemy shell, and then he and his two belt-fillers held their ground with rifles until they were ordered to withdraw. The Naik might have been excused if he had scuttled back with all speed to the trench ; but that was not his way. Men were sent out to assist him, and with their aid he brought in his gun, ammunition, and one man who was too severely wounded to walk. Some odds and ends of arms and equipment along with two shovels still remained in the open. Watching his opportunity, he crept out again and brought them all in. But for his splendid stand our line would certainly have been pierced by the enemy. I think you will agree that his Victoria Cross was splendidly won.

REV. WILLIAM ROBERT FOUNTAINS ADDISON, Chaplain to the Forces.

Mr. Addison was the second clergyman to be awarded the Victoria Cross during the Great War. He was just the type of upright, downright, manly parson that soldiers love. In

Kamerad! Germans surren

(*From the picture by Lucian Jones. By*

dering on the Western Front.

permission of The Illustrated London News.)

his younger days he had lived in a Canadian lumber camp, and had learned to know and influence the roughest of men. Until September 1915 he was curate at St. Edmunds, Salisbury, where he did fine work in connection with the Boys' Brigade. The business of a chaplain is not in the firing-line, but that is where Mr. Addison was frequently to be found during an advance. On one occasion he carried a wounded man to the cover of a trench, assisted several others to a place of safety, and then bound up their wounds. All the time he was under very heavy rifle and machine gun fire. Not only did he exert himself to save life, but by his splendid example and his utter disregard of personal danger he encouraged the stretcher-bearers to go out into a tempest of fire and collect the wounded.

LIEUTENANT-COLONEL JOHN VAUGHAN CAMPBELL, D.S.O., Coldstream Guards.

I am sure that you have not forgotten the story of the Lily Whites, which you read on page 236. You will remember that during the advance of 15th September the Coldstreams found themselves facing two lines of unknown trenches, strongly wired, and defended by machine guns. Against these trenches they made a frontal attack. When Colonel Campbell saw the first two waves of his battalion mown down, he put himself at the head of the third line, rallied his men, and led them forward against the machine guns, which were captured. Later in the day he again called upon the survivors of his battalion, and at a critical moment pushed forward with them through a fierce curtain-fire and carried the trenches. He was one of the first to leap over the German parapet. It was largely due to his splendid courage and resource that defeat was turned into victory, and we were able to win positions of great importance for future operations.

So runs the official account. I will now give you the story as it was told to a special correspondent when Colonel Campbell returned to his home near Oswestry :—

"*Tally-ho! Tally-ho!* The sound of a huntsman's horn, that has been heard so often over the fertile acres of Shropshire, was heard for the first time on the battlefield of the Somme on September 15, 1916. It was sounded by Colonel Campbell, master of the Tanat-side Harriers, who rallied his battalion of the Coldstreams by blowing a silver horn after they had been dispersed by the terrific fire of the enemy, and had lost touch with each other and with their officers. Colonel Campbell went into battle with his revolver in one hand and his huntsman's horn in the other. For years he had accustomed his men to its sound. In peace time he had drilled them with it. It was a silver horn, which had been presented to him by the non-commissioned officers and men of the 1st Battalion when he left them to join the 3rd Battalion. He found that the clear, ringing notes of the horn were more easily heard on the battlefield than those of a whistle or bugle ; there was no mistaking it. When the Coldstreams heard it on the Somme, ' they came running in from the shell-holes just like hounds from the cover,' said Colonel Campbell. ' They came almost immediately after I blew the horn. They seemed to recognize it at once, and they knew it was me.'

" The third line formed up under their brave colonel, and moved forward, bayoneting the machine gunners who had wrought such havoc in their ranks, and marching steadily through the barrage over ground so broken up by shell-fire that it was difficult for the men to keep abreast. The Irish Guards came up in support, and along with them and the Grenadiers the Coldstreams swung forward until the trenches were reached. Many of the Huns clambered out and ran for their lives, and had it not been for a few machine guns that held commanding positions, the Guards would have made a record advance that day.

" Some of the Coldstreams sprang right into a trench where there were foes prepared to put up a real fight. There was great work with the bayonet, and the Huns fought until there were only about a couple of a hundred of them left. Then they held up their hands and surrendered.

" When Colonel Campbell returned home to Oswestry he was accorded a great welcome by the townsfolk. In thanking them for the addresses which they presented to him, he told them that though the Coldstreams had suffered heavily during the attack, he turned to a comrade at the journey's end and said, ' Never mind ; Tanat-side has it ! ' "

BRIGADE-MAJOR WILLIAM LA TOUCHE CONGREVE, D.S.O., M.C., Rifle Brigade.

It is rare in the history of the British Army that the Victoria Cross has been awarded to both father and son. Up to the time when Major Congreve attained the distinction there were only two cases on record. Lord Roberts won his Cross during the Indian Mutiny, and the same decoration was awarded to his son, Lieutenant F. H. S. Roberts, who fell in a gallant attempt to save the guns at Colenso.* General Sir Charles Gough received the coveted honour for his gallantry in India (1857–1858), and his son, Brigadier-General Sir John Edmond Gough, who fell in February 1915, was similarly decorated for a deed of great bravery done in Somaliland in 1903; Major-General Walter Norris Congreve was awarded the Cross for valour during the South African War, and now you are to hear how his gallant son followed his example.

The official record tells us that Major Congreve had shown the most conspicuous bravery during the fourteen days preceding his death. He had already won the D.S.O. and the Military Cross, and had been recommended for the Victoria Cross for capturing two officers and seventy-two men practically single-handed at St. Eloi. While preparations were being made for an attack he scouted far out towards the enemy's lines, and constantly took with him parties of officers in order to make them acquainted with the ground over which they were to advance. All these expeditions were made under fire. Later on he took out a battalion by night, and having placed it in position, pushed forward to an exposed spot, from which he could observe the enemy and give the necessary orders for the assault.

Two days later, on 20th July, when Brigade Headquarters was heavily shelled and there were many casualties, he went out and helped the medical officer to remove the wounded to places of safety, though at the time he was suffering severely from the effects of gas and shell-shock. Some time afterwards he again showed supreme courage in tending the wounded under heavy fire. Finally he returned to the front lines to report upon the situation after an unsuccessful attack, and while in the act of writing was shot and instantly killed. So died a soldier born and bred, a man of the rarest courage and devotion. He was but twenty-five years old when he fell. He had only been married a few weeks, and the Victoria Cross and Military Cross which he had won were

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* Village on the Tugela, Natal; the scene of General Buller's unsuccessful attempt to cross the river (December 15, 1899).

How Private Fynn won the Victoria Cross.

(*By permission of The Sphere.*)

"My first sight of him," said an officer of his regiment, "was when he was running across the open under heavy fire. Bullets were as thick as bees round an overturned hive. He crossed and recrossed with materials to dress the wounds of the men whom he went to assist. He could not bear to see the wounded left untended."

handed to his young widow by the King, who expressed his deep sorrow at the untimely end of so gallant and promising a soldier.

Captain William Barnsley Allen, M.C., M.B., Royal Army Medical Corps.

Captain Allen was born in Sheffield, and took his medical degrees at the university of that city. He was awarded the Military Cross for acts of gallantry on 14th and 20th August, and the higher honour came to him less than two months later. While gun detachments were unloading high-explosive ammunition from wagons which had just come up, the enemy suddenly began to shell the battery position. The first shell fell on one of the limbers, exploded the ammunition, and caused several casualties. Captain Allen saw what had happened, and at once, without a thought for his own safety, ran straight across the open under heavy shell-fire and began dressing the wounded. No doubt by his promptness he saved several men from bleeding to death. He was himself hit four times during the first hour by pieces of shell, one of which broke two of his ribs; but he said nothing, and coolly went on with his work until the last man was bandaged and safely removed. He then went over to another battery, and tended a wounded officer. It was only when this patient was comfortable that he returned to his dug-out and reported his own injuries.

Captain Noel Godfrey Chavasse, M.C., M.B., Royal Army Medical Corps.

Another doctor now figures in our roll of heroes. Captain Chavasse, whose story you shall now hear, was the second son of the Bishop of Liverpool, who humorously complained some time later that whereas he was formerly known as the Bishop, he was now spoken of as Captain Chavasse's father. Captain Chavasse was educated at Trinity College, Oxford, where he won his blue as a sprinter. Prior to the war he was a surgeon at the Southern Hospital, Liverpool, and when duty called he joined the Liverpool Scottish. In 1915 he received the Military Cross for his services in collecting the wounded after the affair at Hooge. It was during one of the attacks on the Somme that his heroic conduct won special admiration. All day he was at work under heavy fire, and in full view of the enemy, tending the wounded. During the night he searched for fallen men right in front of the enemy's lines, and for four hours was in constant peril. Next day he took a stretcher-bearer to one of the advanced trenches, and brought back an urgent case through heavy shell-fire. He himself was wounded in the side during the return journey. The same night he led out a number of volunteers, who rescued three disabled men from a shell-hole only twenty-five yards from the enemy's trench. He also buried the bodies of two officers, and collected many identification discs, and this he did although constantly assailed by bombs and machine guns. Altogether he saved the lives of some twenty comrades, besides dealing with many ordinary cases. The splendid courage and self-sacrifice of this officer cannot be overpraised. He freely risked his life a hundred times to save others. His noble example should be an inspiration to us all.

CAPTAIN ARCHIE CECIL THOMAS WHITE, Yorkshire Regiment.

Captain White was a native of Boroughbridge, Yorkshire, and was educated at King's College, London, of which he was a distinguished student. He obtained his commission in the Green Howards soon after the outbreak of war, and promotion rapidly followed. His first experience of war was in Gallipoli, and the deed which won him the Victoria Cross was performed during the Big Push on the Somme. The troops under his command held the southern and western faces of a redoubt, and for four days and nights, owing to his determined spirit, great courage, and soldierly skill, they managed to beat off attack after attack, and hold out in spite of very heavy fire of all kinds. Though short of supplies and ammunition and assailed by vastly superior numbers, they held out to the end. During one part of the fighting the Germans swarmed into the redoubt, and the captain and his men were almost driven from it. At this critical moment he led a counter-charge, and cleared the enemy out of that part of the redoubt for which he was responsible. The official record tells us that he was the life and soul of the defence, and that he constantly risked his life in holding the position.

LIEUTENANT JOHN VINCENT HOLLAND, Leinster Regiment.

At the outbreak of war Lieutenant Holland, an Irishman by birth, held a position in the engineer's department of the Central Argentine Railway. As soon as he knew that the Empire had need of him he applied to his company for special leave to serve in the British Army, and returned to Great Britain, where he was given a commission in the Leinster Regiment. Lieutenant Holland won the Cross by his splendid gallantry during a bombing attack, which he led at a time when he was far from well. He started out with twenty-five bombers, and when he had searched out the dug-outs of a captured position, fearlessly led his men through our own barrage, and cleared a great part of the ground in front of a village. By this time he had only five bombers left, but had captured fifty prisoners. By pushing on towards the village he enabled his battalion to make a further advance with fewer casualties than it would otherwise have sustained.

SECOND-LIEUTENANT GABRIEL GEORGE COURY, South Lancashire Regiment.

During an advance Lieutenant Coury was in command of two platoons engaged in digging a trench from the old firing-line to a newly-won position. This work had to be done under intense fire; but, thanks to the lieutenant's fine example and his utter contempt of danger, it was completed, and the new position was made secure. Later, after his battalion had suffered heavy casualties, he went out into No Man's Land in broad daylight and in full view of the enemy, found his wounded commanding officer, and brought him back safely over ground swept by machine-gun fire.

CHAPTER XXVI.

HEROES OF THE VICTORIA CROSS.—II.

SERGEANT WILLIAM EWART BOULTER, Northamptonshire Regiment.

During an attack on a wood one company and part of another were held up by an enemy machine gun. Sergeant Boulter, though badly wounded in the shoulder, went forward alone under a hail of bullets and hurled bombs at the enemy gunners. He drove them from their position, and thus not only saved many lives, but enabled our troops to go forward and clear the enemy out of the wood. As this wood covered the flank of the whole attacking force, his success was of very great advantage to us.

SERGEANT ALBERT GILL, King's Royal Rifle Corps.

Sergeant Gill distinguished himself at a very critical moment. The enemy made a very strong counter-attack on the right flank of one of our battalions, rushed a bombing post, and killed all our bombers who were holding it. Sergeant Gill immediately rallied the remnants of his platoon, none of whom were skilled bombers, beat back the enemy, and then made his trench, which was very shallow and much damaged, capable of defence. Soon afterwards the Germans nearly surrounded his little force by creeping up through the thick undergrowth. They then began sniping at a distance of only twenty yards. Sergeant Gill, in the face of almost certain death, stood up boldly in face of the enemy, in order to direct the fire of his men. He was killed almost at once, but not before he had pointed out the position of the hidden snipers and had enabled his men to foil the German attack. He thus saved a very dangerous situation at the cost of his own life.

Sergeant David Jones, Liverpool Regiment.

Another hero who exhibited wonderful courage and resource in the hour of dire peril was Sergeant David Jones. The platoon to which he belonged was ordered to a forward position, and during the advance came under heavy machine-gun fire, the officer being killed and the men suffering severe losses. Sergeant Jones took command of the remainder, occupied the position, and held it for two days and two nights, without food and water, until he was relieved. On the second day he drove back three counter-attacks, and inflicted much loss on the enemy. "His coolness," says the official record, "was most praiseworthy. It was due entirely to his resource and example that his men retained confidence and held their post."

Lance-Sergeant Fred M'Ness, Scots Guards.

During a severe engagement Sergeant M'Ness led his men with great dash in the face of heavy fire from machine guns and rifles. When an enemy position had been rushed, he found that the left flank of his party was being enfiladed by the Germans, who were throwing bombs along the trench. At once he led his men against them, and almost immediately was severely wounded in the neck and jaw. Nevertheless he went back through the death-storm, and brought up fresh supplies of bombs for his men, who at length managed to build up a "block" against the enemy. The sergeant continued to encourage his men, and to throw bombs until he fell exhausted by loss of blood. He appeared before the King to receive his decoration long before he had recovered from his wounds, and it is said that his Majesty showed much sympathy with him, and hoped that he would soon be well again, and live long to enjoy his well-won honour.

Private (acting Corporal) Leo Clarke, Canadian Infantry.

This gallant Canadian will be remembered as the man who, single-handed, put to flight twenty-two Germans. He was detailed with his section of bombers to clear the continuation of a newly captured trench, and to hold back the enemy while a "block" was constructed. When most of his men had fallen and he was busy building the "block," some twenty of the enemy, led by two officers, began a counter-attack. At once he went out to meet them. He emptied his revolver into

Plucky Work of the Ammunition Carriers.

(*From the drawing by F. Matania. By permission of The Sphere.*)

During an attack a constant supply of bombs and ammunition must be sent up to the firing-line. The carriers run forward from shell-hole to shell-hole as opportunity offers. All the time the enemy barrage is attempting to stop their advance. Many fall by the way.

them, and also two enemy rifles which he picked up in the trench. One of the officers then attacked him with the bayonet, wounding him in the leg. Nevertheless the dauntless fellow shot the officer dead, and when the rest of the enemy ran away made shift to follow after them. During the pursuit he shot four more of them, and captured a fifth. Later on he was ordered to the dressing-station, but next day he was on duty again, ready for more adventures.

PRIVATE THOMAS HUGHES, Connaught Rangers.

During the Somme fighting Private Hughes, of the Connaught Rangers, was the very embodiment of that dash and fire for which his countrymen have always been famous. Though wounded in an attack, he returned to the firing-line immediately he had been bandaged. Later in the day he dashed out in front of his company towards an enemy machine gun, shot the gunner, and returned with the weapon. Again he was wounded, but would not leave the field, and before the end of the day had captured and brought in three or four prisoners.

PRIVATE THOMAS ALFRED JONES, Cheshire Regiment.

Prior to the war Private Jones was employed as an engineer by the Salt Union, and lived at Runcorn, in Cheshire. When war broke out he enlisted in the National Reserve, and in 1915 joined one of the county battalions. On 25th September he covered himself with glory by taking no fewer than 102 German prisoners. A sergeant of the R.A.M.C. who was an eye-witness thus describes the amazing feat : " We took a village, and started to dig ourselves in. Soon bullets began to fly all round. Jones turned to his officer and said, ' That nearly got me.' The shower of bullets continued, and a man next to Jones was hit. He then said, ' If I'm to be killed, I'll be killed fighting and not digging,' and he grabbed his rifle and walked over to the German trenches alone. Every one expected to see him go down instantly, and we learned later that one bullet had gone through his helmet and three through his tunic. We gave him up when he entered a German trench ; but eight minutes later two of his pals said, ' He's gone, and we're going too ! ' Others followed, and when they got across to the enemy's trench they saw a sight they'll never forget. There was ' Todger ' Jones standing by a hundred Germans in a big hollow ! He was threatening them with bombs, and they all had their hands up. He told them to put on their coats, and his pals helped to round them up. They included an officer."

His return to Runcorn was eagerly awaited, and when his train steamed into the station he was received with round after round of cheering. He was carried shoulder high along the streets, and so dense was the crowd that he could only reach his home by means of a back street. All sorts of honours were paid to him, and his fellow-employees of the Salt Union presented him with a gift and gave him a reception. Here is his story as he told it to a newspaper correspondent :—

" I entered the trench at the end of it, knowing that only one German at a time could get at me, and when I had potted several of them the others made a run for their dug-out. I got hold of a bomb and threw it down among them. It exploded all right. Then three of them came out, holding their hands up and saying, ' Kamerad ! ' I asked if any of them could speak English, and found that one of them could ; so I told him to tell his mates they could either come up as prisoners or come up and be killed. I said that they must come up without arms or equipment, as there were some thousands of my mates coming along in a few minutes, and it would be hot for them. Well, it was a sight to see them coming out of the dug-out. I did not know what to do with them, so to gain time I told them it would be cold where they were going, and they could go back, two at a time, for their greatcoats. One chap I did not like the look of had to go partly behind me, and he made a bolt for it ; but I whipped round, and with a lucky shot bowled him over. ' Any more of you want to escape ? ' I asked ; but up went all their hands. I can tell you I was thankful when three of my mates came and helped me to round them up, for there were more than a hundred of them."

PRIVATE JOHN CHAPMAN KERR, Canadian Infantry.

The fine exploit of another very gallant Canadian must now be recorded. During a bombing attack Private Kerr, who was acting as bayonet man, lost one of his fingers, which was blown off by a bomb. Seeing that his comrades were short of bombs, and that the enemy must be kept back at all costs, he ran along the back of the German trench, and at close range fired round after round at the enemy. The Germans, believing that they were surrounded, surrendered ; sixty-two of them held up their hands, and 250 yards of trench were captured. Later on he escorted the prisoners to the rear under a heavy fire, and afterwards returned to report himself for duty. Then, and only then, did he seek the doctor and have his wound dressed.

LIEUTENANT-COLONEL ROLAND BOYS BRADFORD, M.C., Durham Light Infantry.

During one of our attacks on the Somme a leading battalion suffered very severely; its flank was dangerously exposed to the enemy at close quarters, and its commanding officer was wounded. Machine guns raked the battalion with continuous fire, and speedy doom seemed to be its fate. Lieutenant-Colonel Bradford's battalion at this time was in support. He at once asked permission to take command of the troops which were in such desperate straits, and as soon as his request was granted pushed forward and joined them. By his heroic example and inspiring leadership he rallied the shaken men, and led them on until their flank was secure and they were out of immediate danger. There is no doubt that Colonel Bradford's splendid energy, courage, and skill prevented a grave disaster.

SECOND-LIEUTENANT TOM EDWIN ADLAM, Bedfordshire Regiment.

During the Somme fighting our operations were held up by the garrison of a village which had defied capture on the previous day. Troops were sent forward to clear the place, and amongst them was Lieutenant Adlam. He and his comrades were heavily assailed by machine-gun and rifle fire, and became scattered. The lieutenant, knowing that the village must be captured without loss of time, rushed from shell-hole to shell-hole under heavy fire, and rallied his men for a sudden rush. For this purpose he also collected many enemy bombs. At this stage of the fighting he was wounded in the leg, but his arm was all right, and he managed to outthrow the enemy. Then seizing his opportunity, he led a rush, in spite of his wound, and carried the position. Again and again he was foremost in bombing attacks. On the following day he was so badly wounded that he could no longer throw bombs. Nevertheless he continued to lead his men, and by the force of his example, skill, and valour won ground that enabled us to make further advances.

SECOND-LIEUTENANT HENRY KELLY, West Riding Regiment.

Lieutenant Kelly was another subaltern who displayed remarkable gallantry and endurance when he and his men were in a tight place. When his comrades were scattered by heavy fire, he rallied them, and led them forward. All were shot down but three. At their head he pushed into an enemy's trench, and there remained throwing bombs until only one man was left to support him. At this moment enemy reinforcements arrived, and he and his comrade were obliged to retire. He hated the thought of leaving his stricken men to fall into the hands of the Germans, so he took a non-commissioned officer on his back, and carried him to our own trenches, some seventy yards away. Then he returned for the other disabled men, and after three journeys brought them all in. By his dauntless courage and self-sacrifice he had richly earned the highest award of valour.

SERGEANT ROBERT DOWNIE, Royal Dublin Fusiliers.

Sergeant Downie, a Glasgow Irishman, was only twenty-three years of age when he won his Cross. He had already been awarded the Military Medal. During an attack on an important enemy position most of the officers of his unit were shot down, and the men, checked by the heavy fire, began to scatter. At this critical moment Sergeant Downie rallied them, and rushing forward alone, shouted, " Come on the Dubs ! " The men responded to his stirring call, and advanced with great spirit. The sergeant, still to the fore, accounted for several of the enemy, and shot down the team of a machine gun, which he captured. The enemy's trench was seized, and Downie, though wounded, remained with his men while four or five counter-attacks were driven off and the new position was made defensible. It was owing to his courage and readiness of mind that an important position was won and held.

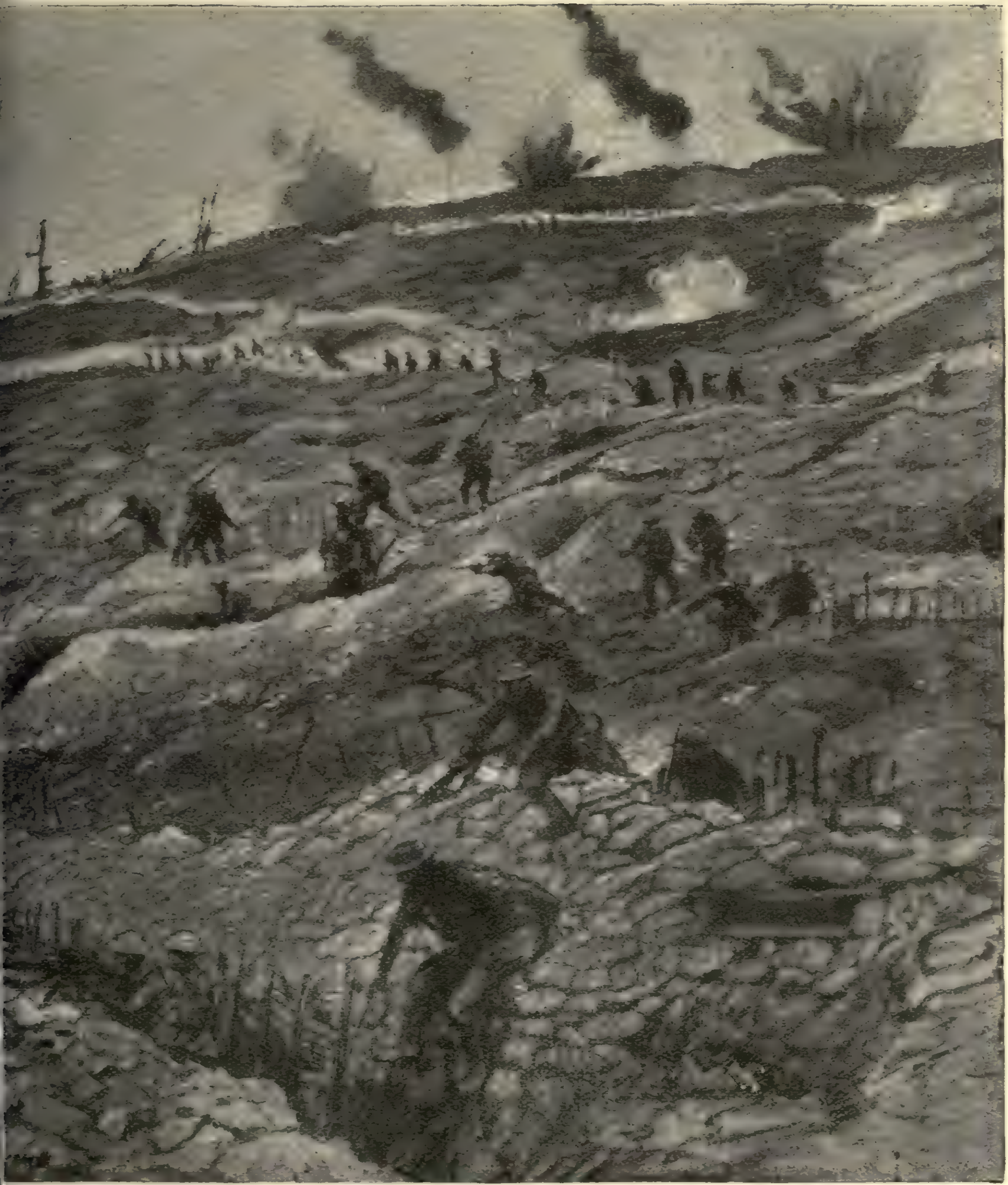
SERGEANT JAMES YOUNG TURNBULL, Highland Light Infantry.

Prior to the war Sergeant Turnbull was employed by a firm of tailors in Oban. As an old volunteer he was soon marked out for promotion, and was appointed platoon sergeant, declining the offer of a commission. The party which he commanded captured an enemy post, which was counter-attacked very fiercely for a whole day. Although Sergeant Turnbull's men

The Naval Division storming the Enemy's

(From the picture by John Bryan. By

The splendid work of the Naval Division is fully recounted in Chapter XXIV. Lieutenant-Colonel
Naval Division. The story of how he won



Positions during the Advance on Beaucourt.

permission of The Illustrated London News).

Freyberg, whose splendid leadership led to the capture of Beaucourt, commanded a battalion of the
the Victoria Cross is told on pp. 299–303.

were wiped out and replaced several times during the progress of the fighting, he held on to his position with grim determination, being fully aware that if he withdrew the loss of the post would be very serious. Almost single-handed he fought against a host, and showed the highest valour and skill in beating back the enemy. Later in the day, while he was throwing bombs against Germans who were attempting to take the position from the rear, he was mortally wounded.

PRIVATE FREDERICK JEREMIAH EDWARDS, Middlesex Regiment.

The Germans, as you know, have always been famous for their iron discipline. They are drilled until they become mere machines set in motion and continued in motion by their officers. There is little or no place in the German system for what is known as initiative—that is, starting and carrying out a job " on your own." The German soldier is not trained to think for himself, or to take advantage of an opportunity without waiting for orders. The consequence is that, when he has no longer officers to direct him, he seems to be helpless, and to have no resource but surrender. The British soldier, on the other hand, is encouraged to use his wits and to order his own goings in all cases of emergency.

In this chapter you have read several times of British soldiers who, without waiting for orders, cleared away some difficulty or removed some obstacle, or stemmed some dangerous movement on the part of the enemy. Private Edwards won his Cross by heroism of this kind. When part of our line was held up by machine-gun fire, when officers had fallen, and the men were in confusion and about to retire, he ran out alone towards the gun that was causing the mischief and knocked it out with bombs. By his great presence of mind and his splendid gallantry, he not only saved his comrades from disaster, but enabled them to make another advance and win valuable ground.

PRIVATE ROBERT RYDER, Middlesex Regiment.

This intrepid soldier won his Cross for displaying similar qualities of initiative and personal bravery. His company was held up by heavy rifle-fire, and all his officers were disabled. For a moment there was no leader, and the attack flagged. Private Ryder was equal to the emergency. He dashed ahead, entirely alone, and with his Lewis gun cleared the enemy's trench. His example so greatly inspired his fellows that they followed him, took possession of the German position, and were able to push on and win fresh ground. Thus by springing to the front at a critical moment Private Ryder turned failure into success.

PRIVATE HERBERT WILLIAM LEWIS, Welsh Rifles.

In earlier pages I have described the raids which our men were in the habit of making upon the opposite trenches in order to set the nerves of the Germans on edge, to make them uncertain where the real blow was to fall, and to bring back information as to the troops opposed to them. While advancing towards the enemy's trench during one of these raids, Private Lewis was twice wounded; but he refused to go back to the dressing station, and showed great pluck while searching the dug-outs. A third time he was wounded, but again "carried on." At this moment three of the enemy bore down upon him. Despite his wounds, he fought them single-handed, and captured them all. Even when the order was given to retire, he did not cease in well-doing. He went to the assistance of a wounded man amidst very heavy shell and rifle fire, and brought him in safely. "Private Lewis," says the official record, "showed throughout a brilliant example of courage, endurance, and devotion to duty."

LIEUTENANT-COLONEL BERNARD CYRIL FREYBERG, D.S.O., Royal Naval Division.

I will now tell you the story of one of the most daring fighters who ever wore a British uniform. You will remember that I promised to relate this story when I was describing the capture of Beaucourt. Lieutenant-Colonel Freyberg was a Londoner by birth, but had spent his schooldays in New Zealand, and had travelled a good deal on the American continent. At the outbreak of war he was in Mexico; but he immediately sailed for England, and reported himself to the High Commissioner for New Zealand, who passed him on to the Admiralty. Within eight days of landing at Liverpool he was appointed lieutenant in the Naval Division. He accompanied the expedition sent to Antwerp in those early days of the war when the Germans were besieging the city. If you turn back to Chapter XXXVI., Volume II., you will read that, though the numbers of the Naval Division were small, their equipment very imperfect, and their training had scarcely begun, they fought in the trenches with all the doggedness and cheerfulness of their race. Some of them were forced over the frontier into Holland, and were there interned; but our hero escaped, though he had afterwards to nurse a wound. His next taste of war was in Gallipoli, where during the landing which we made on the Gulf of Xeros (April 25, 1915), in order to distract the attention of the enemy from the great operations going on at the tip of the peninsula, he distinguished himself by carrying out a daring raid, which I shall now describe.

He was placed in command of three boatloads of men, and was ordered to go ashore at a certain place, and there light flares in order to draw the fire of certain concealed Turkish guns. When he received his instructions he pointed out to his general that this meant death to his men; their boats would probably be destroyed by the enemy's guns, and they would have no means of returning. He asked to be allowed to carry out the work alone, and the general consented. At once he began his preparations. He went on board the destroyer which was to convoy him and to discover the whereabouts of the hidden guns, and painted his body khaki colour so as to make himself less visible when he landed; then he prepared rafts for the oil flares, and attached a knife and a revolver to his belt.

Thus equipped, he dropped quietly into the sea, and, towing his rafts, swam ashore. This was no trouble to him, as he was an expert long-distance swimmer. After exploring a little inland, and spying out the enemy's position, he returned to the beach and lighted a flare. In a few minutes the boom of heavy guns was heard, and shells began to fall near the spot. By this time, however, he was in the sea again, and out of harm's reach. When the firing died down he slipped ashore once more, and lighted another flare, whereupon the firing broke out afresh. A third time he repeated this performance, and then his task was done, for the destroyer had spotted the position of the enemy's guns. For this fine exploit he was awarded the Distinguished Service Order.

The scene now shifts to the banks of the little river Ancre on November 13, 1916. You will remember that on that day the Highlanders were to carry Beaumont Hamel, and the Naval Division on their right was to capture the village of Beaucourt. A strong redoubt on the hillside above Hamel held up most of the Naval Division, and no general advance was possible until

A "Runner who must not run." Advancing under Shell and Machine-gun Fire.

(*By permission of The Illustrated London News.*)

A "runner" is a soldier told off to carry messages from one trench to another. Every regimental officer has one or more runners ready at his call, and the duty is much sought after by the more adventurous men. They may run under rifle-fire, but not under shell-fire. "There is, I suppose," says a correspondent, "no one more calmly persistent in doing his job than an English runner."

the Tanks could be brought up to clear away the obstacle. Next morning (14th November) another attempt was made to advance; but while the naval men were struggling forward, the surprising news arrived that Beaucourt had been carried by storm. The man who had revealed the Turkish guns on Gallipoli was now master of Beaucourt.

Let me tell you the story. Picture the naval men starting off for the German lines in the mist and darkness of an early November morning. While most of the brigades find themselves held up by the fire of the redoubt above Hamel, Colonel Freyberg's men on the right sweep along the bank of the river right over the first system of German trenches, and reach the station road. (See pages 260–261.) Here they become scattered in the gloom, and are all at sixes and sevens. Before they can attempt to carry the next line they must be collected and re-formed. The work is very difficult, for the men are wide apart, some in shell-holes, some in trenches, and some pushing ahead. To and fro amidst the heavy shell-fire, caring nothing for the danger, goes the gallant colonel; and soon he has rallied his men, and added to them a number of others from units which have become mixed up with his own.

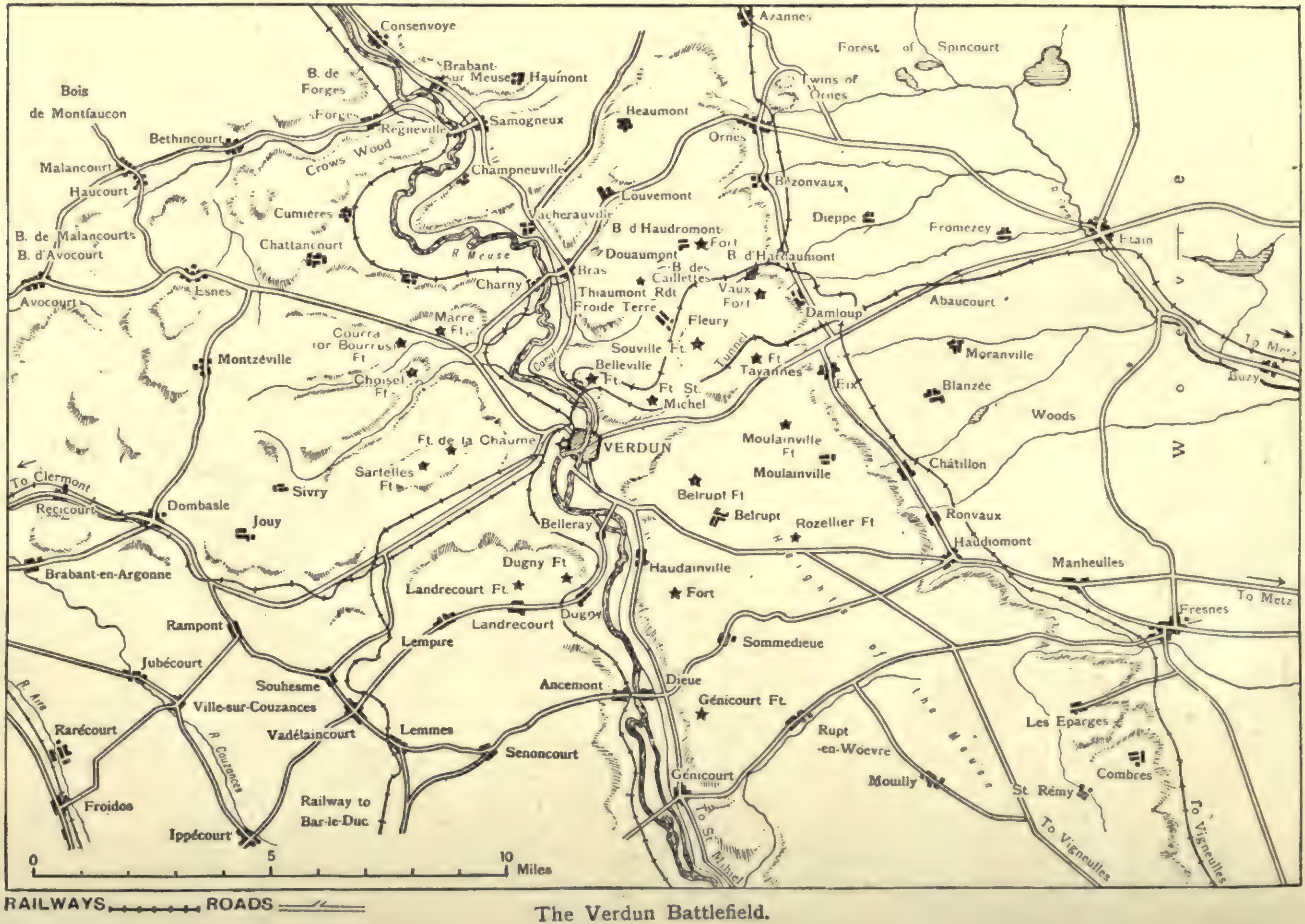
All is now ready, and he leads his sailors forward against the second line. Again they carry all before them, and hundreds of Germans hold up their hands. By this time he has been twice wounded, but he can still go on. Again he rallies and re-forms his men, now greatly reduced in numbers, and once more leads the way. By twenty-one minutes past eight in the evening the Beaucourt Trench is carried, and he is lying outside the village, upon which our shells are falling fast and thick. He sends off a message by pigeon post to the rear, and digs in. He is now more than a mile from his point of departure that morning.

All through the night he and his men hold on to their advanced position like grim death. Shells burst around them, bullets whistle among them, and a deadly machine-gun fire beats down upon their left flank. Meanwhile the pigeon has reached headquarters safely, and a Territorial battalion has been ordered up to support him. It pushes along the edge of the stream, under such shelter as the banks afford, and in the morning joins hands with the sorely tried men on the edge of Beaucourt.

But where are the battalions that are to support him on the left? The Tanks have put the redoubt out of action, but still they do not arrive. Some of them have lost direction, and the rest are busy clearing ground between Station Road and the Beaucourt Trench. Colonel Freyberg by this time is tired of waiting. He has been waiting nearly twenty-four hours, and he now determines to carry the village without assistance at the first glimmer of dawn.

At daybreak he clambers over the parapet with his men, and the attack on the village begins. Before he has gone far he is wounded a third time, but nothing save a bullet in a vital part can stop him now. You see him leading his men over heaps of broken brickwork and the corpses of huddled Germans—"a strange, flying figure wrapped in soiled bandages." As a petty officer puts it, "he is the liveliest casualty that ever boarded a German trench." For ten minutes the sailors fling bombs at close range, and ply the bayonet with deadly effect. A few obstinate Prussians refuse to surrender; one of them has to be beaten into subjection by the bare fists of a brawny seaman before he will put up his hands. Hordes of very dirty and very weary Huns come crawling out of their lairs, crying "Kamerad!" Beaucourt is ours.

Even now this liveliest of casualties is not content to lay down his command and seek the hospital bed which is ready to receive him. Late in the afternoon he is hit for the fourth time, but still he will not retire. He has yet to place posts to the east and north-east in order to prevent surprise, and he has not yet given his successor those full and minute instructions which will enable him to hold the village which has been so gallantly won. At last, however, his task is done, and he returns to the base to nurse his honourable wounds. Thanks to his brilliant leadership, his superb courage, and his magnificent example, he has succeeded with a single battalion where brigades have failed, and has won a renown which will never be forgotten while British hearts are stirred by the story of valiant deeds.



The Verdun Battlefield.

CHAPTER XXVII.

HOW THE FRENCH RECAPTURED FORT DOUAUMONT.

YOU will remember that Sir Douglas Haig, in his dispatch dated December 22, 1916, told us very plainly that one of the great objects of the Big Push on the Somme was to draw off pressure from the sorely assailed French at Verdun. You are now to read how this was accomplished. It is a wonderful story which I have to tell—a story of the most superb heroism and the most remarkable skill. It will be all the more pleasing to you because it had a happy ending.

Our French Allies were never so great as during the eight months in which the Germans strained every nerve to capture the old city on the Meuse. History does not record fiercer assaults or more determined defences. The Germans flung away life like water, and the French sacrificed themselves in thousands; and when the end came Verdun was still intact, and the enemy had nothing to show for the awful slaughter which he had suffered. The great French recovery at Verdun was the heaviest blow that the Germans had as yet suffered.

Why did the Germans covet Verdun so greatly? In the old days it was a fortress—the strongest fortress on the eastern frontier of France. In former wars its capture would have been a disaster for France, perhaps almost as grave as the fall of Metz in the war of 1870. But when the Germans set themselves to capture the city it was no longer a fortress. As soon as General Sarrail saw the strongholds of Belgium and Northern France crumbling to ruin beneath the mighty blows of the Austrian howitzers, he realized that no walls, however strong, could resist for more than a few days. He therefore drew great lines of entrenchment far out from the city, laid down railways, and mounted his guns so that they could be moved quickly to points of danger. He discarded the old fortress altogether, and the lines of Verdun became continuous with those which ran from the North Sea to the borders of Switzerland. Their capture could mean nothing more than the occupation of a certain amount of barren highland.

The German High Command, however, had constantly spoken of Verdun as a fortress, and the German people had been taught to believe that its capture would be of the utmost importance to them. They believed that, once their troops were in the city, France would sue for peace, and be ready to accept their terms, however hard. As a matter of fact, even supposing the Germans had captured Verdun, they would have been no better off than if they had seized a portion of Flanders or Champagne. Nevertheless the capture of Verdun would have been hailed by the Germans as a great victory; it would have put new heart into their people, and would have stimulated them to bear every kind of hardship and suffering in order to bring the war to a victorious end.

I told you (page 190, Vol. V.) that a great Swiss general declared on 9th April that the French had won the battle of Verdun. He was a very far-seeing man, and his prophecy proved to be true; but you must not suppose that the Germans had at that time given up all hope of winning the city. Indeed, by the third week in May the situation was more gloomy for the French than it had been in February. The Germans had reached the village of Fleury, which you will see on the map (page 304), about three miles north-east of Verdun. They were now battering at the inner defences of the city, and were in a position to make a direct drive towards it. In the month of June they did their utmost to give the French a knock-out blow. They knew that the Big Push on the Somme would soon begin, and they hoped to finish the job at Verdun before the fighting in Picardy forced them to send some of their troops northward.

In March General Petain was promoted to the command of a group of armies, and his place was taken by General Nivelle, a gallant soldier who was only a colonel when the war broke out. Promotion came to him rapidly, as it always does to men of real merit in war time. As far back as August 19, 1914, he had attracted notice by being the first French commander to capture German guns. During the fighting in Alsace he

General Nivelle, Defender of Verdun and Generalissimo of France.

(*By permission of The Illustrated London News.*)

seized eighteen pieces from the enemy, and sent them to Belfort. In the next month his splendid boldness in pushing his artillery in front of the infantry saved a most dangerous situation. Again, in January 1915, when Soissons was attacked by the Germans, he did more than any other man to stem the German onslaught, and prevent the town from falling into the hands of the enemy. These and other notable services marked him out as the successor to Petain in the defence of Verdun. You will remember that Petain took command at a time of great peril. There was even greater peril when General Nivelle succeeded him.

You will be interested to learn that General Nivelle's grandmother was an Englishwoman belonging to a well-known family which had lived for many generations at Deal. As a child the general was frequently in England, and he carried away happy memories of his visits. He was accustomed to speak of England as his mother's land. His grandaunt was Mrs. Elizabeth Carter, a lady who lived in the time of Dr. Johnson, knew many languages, wrote for the magazines, and was the friend of most of the scholars of her day. General Nivelle was fifty-seven years of age when he took command at Verdun, and was renowned far and wide as a most skilful and enterprising officer.

On 11th July, ten days after the Big Push on the Somme began, the Germans made a determined attack along the front from Thiaumont to Fort Vaux, aiming especially at Fleury, in the centre. They swept the French completely out of the village, and were now only about one thousand yards from Fort Souville, one of the inner defences of the city. It was clear that, unless Nivelle could drive the Germans out of Fleury, the fall of Verdun could not long be delayed.

Four days later General Mangin, "the great hard hitter of the French army," began a series of desperate attacks in order to recover Fleury. Gradually the battle extended all along the front on the right bank of the Meuse, and the Germans found themselves foiled. Instead of being able to carry the last defences of Verdun, they were obliged to battle furiously in order to maintain the positions which they had won at such a terrible cost in the first month of the struggle.

Fierce fighting enabled the French to win back the site of Fleury by 18th August, and though the Germans made a big effort to recover it on 3rd September, they could make no headway. Thereafter for six weeks nothing much was done by either side. Nivelle was preparing a great assault, in the hope of bringing the battle for Verdun to a decisive end.

A correspondent tells us that before and during the battle he saw behind the lines scenes which proved clearly that in the seven months since the struggle began the French had improved their means of defence in a wonderful fashion. He says that if the munition workers of France and England could have seen the huge supply of guns and shells gathered for the great assault, they would have been proud of their work. At the beginning of the struggle it was only the heroism of the French troops which held off the Germans. Now our Allies were even more amply supplied with artillery and ammunition than the enemy.

When the great battle for Verdun was going on in the early months of the year, the roads behind the front were as thronged with traffic as the heart of the city of London. The great main road from Bar-le-Duc to Verdun was reserved for motor traffic, and each day there passed along it four thousand motor lorries —that is, one every twenty-five seconds. Never in history has a highway carried so great a weight of materials in so short a time as that main road in the early months of the struggle.

In March 1916 our correspondent saw two streams of motor traffic passing along the road unceasingly in either direction. He saw highways a foot deep with greasy mud, and hundreds of road-menders working as though the lives of the entire French army depended on their efforts.

> " I shall never forget the sight of those men hurling piles of stone between the rapidly running lorries. They were coated with mud from head to foot. They would spring under the front wheels of a car, not an inch from death, and with a quick movement spread the stones across the roadway. This done, they would leap back to the safety of the gutter."

Now the scene was entirely changed. There was no feverish haste ; there were no frantic road-menders hurling stones under the wheels of the lorries at the risk of their lives. Motor convoys still passed, but passed almost at their leisure. Their work had been taken over by light railways, which had been laid down across the fields in all directions. In place of the gangs of wild road-menders there were parties of Asiatics from

Indo-China, doing the work as placidly as if they were thousands of miles from a battlefield. There was no flurry, no confusion behind the lines. Everything was now cut and dried; the organization was perfect. Even the little Algerian donkeys that carried ammunition to the front were not hurried. Everything worked with the smoothness and regularity of a machine.

* * * * * * *

I am sure you have not forgotten the desperate fighting round the ruined forts of Douaumont and Vaux. The former, you will remember, was captured by the enemy on the evening of February 25, 1916; the latter on the morning of June 7 in the same year. It was against these positions, on a five-mile front, that General Nivelle meant to launch his great attack. Three divisions had been brought up to the front for the purpose. Though they had all previously fought in this part of the line, the general had left nothing to chance, and for several weeks past he had given them special training in the rear. A large model had been made showing the country over which the men would have to advance, and this they studied until they were familiar with all its features. They were eager for the great adventure; they were the finest fighting men that France could produce.

On the morning of 21st October, when the sky was clear and the French aviators could see the German positions clearly, and thus direct the fire of their guns accurately, a terrible bombardment began, and continued for four days. On the third day a huge shell caused a fire in Douaumont Fort, and by the evening of that day the enemy trenches were utterly destroyed. Before, however, the infantry were launched against the positions, a feint attack was delivered for the purpose of making the enemy reveal the situation of his hidden guns. The Germans were deceived into thinking that the real attack was in progress, and they opened fire all along the line. The French aviators "spotted" one hundred and thirty of these batteries, and Nivelle's howitzers at once assailed them. Some sixty were silenced before the real attack began.

General Nivelle had arranged to send his men over the parapets at 11.40 on the morning of 24th October. The men were in fine fighting fettle, and they were greatly inspired by the following order of the day, which was issued to one of the assaulting divisions:—

"Officers, non-commissioned officers, and men,—It is nearly eight months since our hated enemy, the Boche, tried to astonish the world by a thunder-stroke in the capture of Verdun. The heroism of the *poilus* * of France has barred his road and destroyed his best troops. Thanks to the splendid defence of Verdun, Russia has been able to inflict upon the enemy a terrible defeat, and to take nearly 400,000 prisoners.

"Thanks to the defenders of Verdun, England and France are beating the enemy every day on the Somme, where they have already taken nearly 60,000 prisoners. Thanks to the defenders of Verdun, the army of Salonika, the army of the Balkans, is beating the Bulgars and the Turks. The Boche is now trembling before our guns and our bayonets; he feels that the hour of punishment is near.

"It is our division which has the special honour of giving him a resounding blow which shall show to the world that the German army is in a state of decay. We are going to wrest from the enemy a fragment of the soil where so many of our heroes lie in their shrouded glory.

"A division will fight upon our left which has already made its name glorious; it is composed of Zouaves.† To them will fall the honour of capturing Douaumont Fort. May our comrades know that they can count upon us to help them, to open the gate for them, and to share their glory.

"Officers, non-commissioned officers, and men, you will hang the Cross of War on your flag and on your pennant. With your first stroke you will bring your renown to the level of that of our most famous regiments and battalions."

A heavy fog hung over the battlefield as the men went forward next morning. They could only see a short distance around them, and had they been less well trained, or directed by less skilled officers, they might easily have gone astray. The officers, however, guided their steps by means of the compass, and the barrage gave them the general direction. All advanced at a steady walk, without a break in the line. A correspondent with the French army said that no one who had not been on the ground could appreciate the splendid advance made by the French troops that day. As they swept forward with the bayonet without firing a shot, they were far less troubled by the enemy than by the terrible condition of the ground. "My men," said an officer, "actually covered 100 yards in four minutes, and how they did it is more than I can understand."

Perhaps you consider an advance of 100 yards in four minutes, or 1,500 yards in an hour, or the 3,000 yards to Douaumont in two hours, as rather slow progress; but you must remember that the mud was so deep, and the shell-holes were

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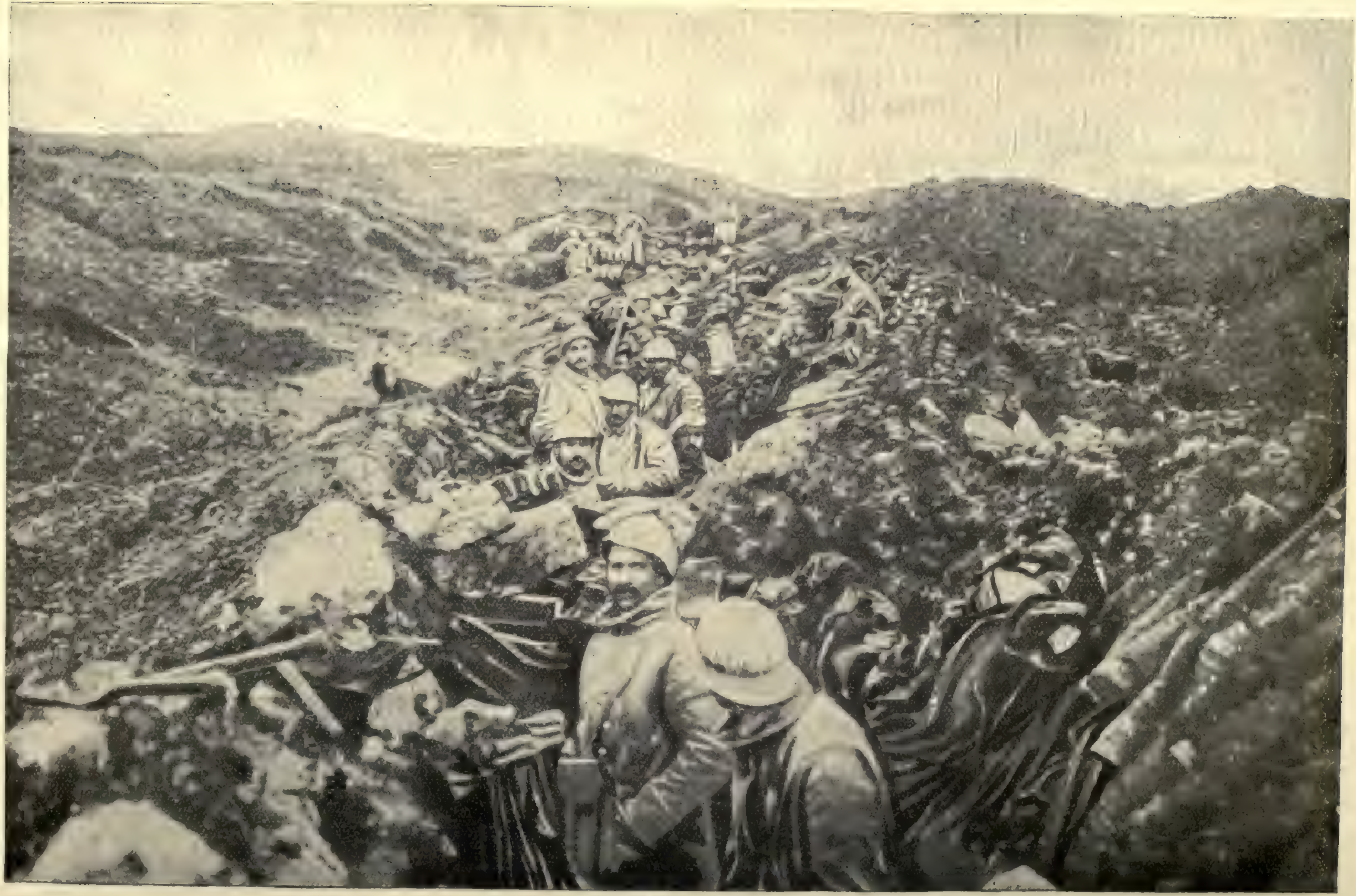
* *Pwa-loo,* French privates; so called because they allowed their beards to grow.

† See Vol. II., p. 6.



French Troops occupying a captured German Trench leading to Fort Douaumont.

(*By permission of The Illustrated London News.*)

so frequent, that it is marvellous that the men were able to get along at all. General Nivelle himself did not suppose that the men could reach the fort in three hours. When the infantry came out of their trenches for the assault, the heavily laden men fell not once but two or three times for every few steps that they made. The mud was like glue; a great effort was needed to pluck a foot from its grip. Those who fell into deep shell-holes sank up to the waist in sticky slime.

But there was no waste of time. As the wall of shells moved on, the men stumbled after it, and those who were lucky enough to be only ankle-deep or knee-deep gave a helping hand to their less fortunate comrades who stuck fast. The barrage, directed by aeroplanes flying less than 150 feet up, swept remorselessly on, and was followed by slipping and tumbling men with faces, clothes, and helmets literally plastered with mud.

"General Mud" won no success that day. Nothing could stop the magnificent soldiers of France once they were set going. They floundered through seas of mud and pools of water, singing the "Marseillaise."* "March on! march on!" was their battle-cry that day.

The following account of the battle is mainly taken from an article written by a French observing officer and published in a French journal. The writer first reminds us that modern battles afford no spectacle. All that is seen is a great empty space dotted with shell-holes and furrowed by trenches. Columns of smoke spring up from bursting shells; a line of shadowy men creep close to the earth and then disappear; the ruins of a village burst into fire—that is all. The men engaged in the battle know nothing save what is going on in the small section of the line in front of them. The progress of the fighting is only known to headquarters, which receives a constant supply of news from all parts of the line by means of telephones, signals, pigeon post, and dispatch riders.

Souville Hill is the only one of all the heights around Verdun which reaches the altitude of Douaumont.† Between Souville Hill and Douaumont is the Fleury ridge, and beyond the crest lies the fort of Douaumont. All these positions were to be carried that day. "I had so often looked at this landscape of hill and ravine," wrote the officer, "that I had it in my eyes on the morning of 24th October, when I took my post at Souville. My eyes, however, looked for it in vain. A thick fog prevented me from seeing anything, except the nearest slope, and here and there a broken tree-trunk."

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* See Vol. I., pp. 54–55. † See map on page 317.

Through the fog whistled a storm of shells. A thousand guns were roaring in chorus, the sharp complaint of the 75's mingling with the heavy bass of the howitzers. Would the fog prevent the barrage from advancing as the troops went forward? If so, the day would end in disaster; if not, the fog would be of great advantage, for the enemy would be taken by surprise.

As the hour fixed for the attack drew nigh our officer ran over in his mind the various bodies of troops which were soon to advance against the enemy's lines. From Haudromont quarries on his left to Douaumont Fort in front of him lay a division composed of Zouaves and the Moroccans who had retaken Fleury on 17th August. To the right were the Chasseurs, and still farther on were the troops which were to carry Vaux and Hardaumont.

"Every now and again I pulled out my watch. Eleven o'clock! Eleven-twenty! Eleven-forty! The time fixed. Had the attack, which I ought to have seen rise and roll down the ravine and then sweep over the opposing slope, been launched? Had the artillery properly lengthened its fire? It was impossible to know. At eleven-fifty, on the right I heard the *tick-tack* of machine guns. If machine guns were in action our men must have been seen, must now be meeting with resistance. Then I heard them no more. The roar of the guns drowned everything, and again I went through a period of uncertainty and anxiety. At last news came through to me. The start was magnificent, and the first position had been reached. The men were resting and reorganizing, and were soon going to get on the move again. Now they were off once more.

"An aeroplane hums over my head. The pilot is flying so low that it looks as if he is going to touch me. I see the enormous bulk of his machine loom gray through the fog. He comes down still lower. I was told later that the pilot had been able to shout 'Forward!' to our men.

"Towards two o'clock a wind begins to worry the flying clouds, and gradually chases them away. In the intervals of their flight first a slope then a crest appears. At last I begin to see. I recognize Fleury crest, the slopes of Douaumont, and then Douaumont itself. The clouds are now flying so fast that in a second their ranks are broken, and the landscape stands out with that sharp clearness which precedes bad weather.

"Through my artillery glasses I can count the shell-holes. They are all full of water. What a time our men must have had if they went through there! The landscape is not dead. Over there, on the slopes of Douaumont, earth-coloured men are moving about. To the left and to the right they are marching in Indian file. They are advancing, climbing, and gradually getting nearer the fort. At last there is one who stands out on the sky-line as clearly as a shadow show. Others are going down a gorge.

They are going to be seen. They will be mown down. Don't show yourselves like that! It is madness! They are moving; they turn and describe a vast circle around Douaumont, as though they were performing a dance of victory. I want to shout. I have shouted, but I did not hear the sound of my own voice in the noise of bursting shells. I must have shouted, for my teeth shut upon some earth splashed up into my open mouth by a shell which had just fallen close to me. Douaumont is ours!"

Now that we have obtained a few distant glimpses of the progress of the battle, let us follow the troops and learn how they fared. On the extreme left our Allies had to capture the Haudromont quarries, which the Germans had turned into a maze of redoubts and fortified works, out of the reach of artillery fire, and defended by nests of machine guns. The French carried the outer position, but bomb-fighting in the quarries continued for a long time. The Germans speedily launched a counter-attack, and beyond the quarry the French left did not advance that day.

On the right, however, better success was won, despite the difficult ground over which the advance had to be made. Up the wet clay slopes of Fleury the men floundered and slipped as they pushed forward. Nevertheless they reached the railway line between Fleury and Vaux. After a pause for rest they were re-formed, and just as the clouds and fog began to disperse the advance continued. General Ancelin, at the head of his men, met a soldier's death; but a colonel took his place, and the line swept on without a halt until the trenches on the eastern side of Douaumont had been captured. From this position the troops were able to watch the progress of their comrades who were advancing against the fort. It was a glorious sight which they saw. The colonial troops swept forward like a rising tide. To the east the Chasseurs could be seen climbing the slopes, and away in the rear was an unending gray column of prisoners wending its way back to Fleury.

Now let us see how the centre had progressed. It surrounded and captured the Thiaumont redoubt, and by 2.45 Douaumont village was again in French hands. The troops pushed on, and dug in beyond its north-western outskirts. Our Allies were now on three sides of Douaumont Fort, and were closing in on it every moment. Soon all was ready for the last rush. To the Moroccans, who had captured Fleury, was given the honour of making the final assault. Before these gallant colonials could reach the fort, they found that they had to recapture trenches which had already been in French hands. The troops which had occupied them had been withdrawn, because they were so near to the fort that they were under fire from their own guns. The Germans discovered that these trenches were empty, and in the thick fog pushed into them without being seen. The Moroccans, nothing daunted, bombed their way into the trenches, and soon cleared them ; but while they were so engaged another colonial battalion swept past and pushed beyond the fort. For weeks these men had thought of nothing but its capture. On the training-ground at the rear they had assaulted a model of it again and again. Every man knew his station and precisely what he had to do.

In the thick fog they now prepared to realize their long-cherished hopes. They were guided by the compass, which on this occasion, owing to the attraction of a revolver or some other piece of metal, proved a false guide. Happily, before the men had gone too far in the wrong direction, the fog lifted, and two German prisoners who were being brought in pointed out the rising height on which the fort stood. When the men saw it they gazed upon it with rapture, as though it were a sacred vision.

The Marsouins,* dragging one foot after another from the mud, made what speed they could, and, strange to say, met with no resistance. Close upon three o'clock the first detachment entered the fort without firing a shot or being fired upon. Then other troops, guided by a low-flying aeroplane showing the three colours of France, advanced to the ditch and climbed up the steep rampart. At the top they saw before them the gaping openings of the lower casemates, and in front of them the courtyard, which looked as though a volcano had suddenly burst into eruption in its midst. For a moment the men gazed at the awful havoc which had been wrought by their shells ; then they set to work to rout out the hidden machine guns which were beginning to open fire. The Germans made but a brief resistance, and soon the fort was cleared. In seven hours of fierce fighting the French had undone all the work done by the Germans since 25th February.

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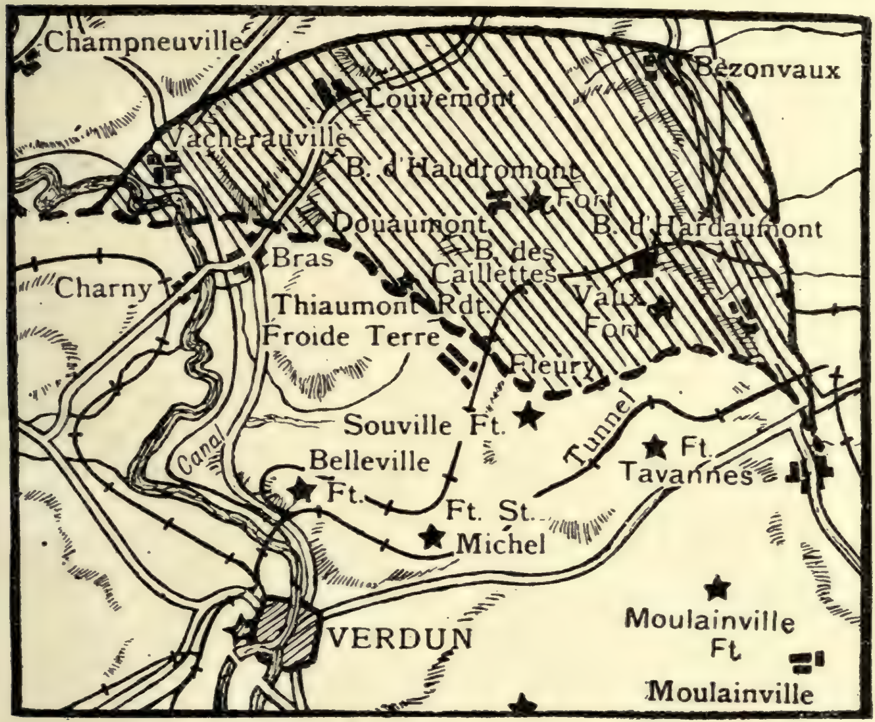
* The French word *marsouin* means a porpoise. In the French army it is a slang term for a colonial infantryman.

A French writer thus describes the fort as he saw it two days later :—

" In the casemates everything goes to show the speed of our attack and the rapidity of the German defeat. Arms and clothing lie in heaps on the beds ; the tables are still covered with food. Everything was, there is no doubt, perfectly quiet and in order when our Marsouins burst in. From the outside the fort looks like a huge heap of black earth ; the moats and ditches no longer exist, and there is nothing but a frightful chaos of stones and of mud, in which you have to search for a hole which once was an entrance. The work of our artillery was awful. There is not only not a yard but not a square inch of ground between the first German line and the fort which has not been torn up by shell-fire. It is impossible to imagine destruction on such a scale."



Map to illustrate the French recovery at Verdun.

The fort had been covered in with a great shield of sand

and armoured cement. Beneath the mighty hammer-blows of the French 16-inch howitzers this shield had been broken through in three places, and all the upper works had been completely destroyed. In three days over four hundred tons of shell and high explosives had fallen upon the fort. No work of man could resist such a bombardment.

The glad, good news that Douaumont had been recaptured sped like wildfire through France, and the lips of tens of thousands moved in humble thanks to God. Next day General Nivelle issued the following Army Order to the victorious troops:—

> "Officers, non-commissioned officers, and men of the Mangin group,—In a few hours, by a magnificent assault, you have wrested at one blow from your powerful enemy the ground bristling with obstacles and fortresses to the north-east of Verdun, which took him eight months to win in fragments, and at the cost of desperate efforts and great sacrifice. You have added fresh and striking laurels to those which cover the colours of the Verdun army. On behalf of that army I thank you. You have deserved well of your country."

As you may imagine, the baffled and discomfited Germans were not prepared to lose the positions which they had won at such a cost without fierce attempts to recover them. During the succeeding days they made counter-attack after counter-attack, but all were in vain. Douaumont was firmly held.

We have now to learn how Fort Vaux was captured. It was a much harder nut to crack than Douaumont, for there was no chance of surprising it. The German regiment which held it had been warned that the French attack was preparing, and might be launched at any moment. For a depth of a mile and a quarter in front of the fort the ground had been seamed with trenches. In every shell-crater a nest of machine guns had been installed, and nothing had been left undone to make the place impregnable. General Nivelle's guns, however, made havoc of the trenches, and on the evening of 24th October the French infantry carried the first line after heavy fighting. The capture of the fort, however, was a very slow and difficult business. Every shell-hole and blockhouse had to be besieged and captured before an attempt could be made on the fort itself. It was not until the morning of 2nd November that the besiegers heard explosions within it, and observed other signs which showed them that the Germans were leaving it. They decided to break into the stronghold that night.

The First French Soldier to enter Fort Douaumont.

Paul Dumont, a young Parisian of twenty-one, said to be the first man to re-enter Fort Douaumont after its capture on October 24, 1916.

Scouting parties prowled round the fort in the darkness seeking an entrance. At last a very narrow opening was found, and a man crept in and discovered that the stores which the Germans had set on fire were still smouldering, and that bombs and cartridges were exploding in the underground chambers as the fire reached them. Fort Vaux had been retaken.

On 10th March the Germans had climbed the northern slopes of the stronghold, and were only two or three hundred yards from the counterscarp. To cross those two or three hundred yards took them three long months of desperate struggle. They rained shells upon the place; they made ceaseless attacks on it; they flung away the lives of the flower of their nation; but still Major Raynal and his heroic garrison refused to be driven out. Then at last the fort fell, and for four months the Boche polluted it with his presence. Now it had been retaken, and France gloried in the knowledge that above the mass of ruin which had become a symbol of her deathless heroism the tricolour again flew. The defence, the loss, and the recapture of Fort Vaux will for ever remain a landmark in French history. Its story has been told in burning words by M. Henry Bordeaux, one of the greatest of French novelists, who fought as a captain at Verdun. Frenchmen of the future will read his pages with the same stirring of the heart that is awakened by the Song of Roland.*

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* One of the great heroes of the Middle Ages. He held Roncesvalles, and refused to sound his horn to summon help until his doom was sealed. The sound of the horn was heard thirty leagues away, and Charlemagne hastened to his rescue, only to find him dead but unconquered.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE GREAT FRENCH RECOVERY.

THE loss of important positions in front of Verdun was a great blow to the enemy. The Crown Prince was the general responsible, and it would never do to permit the Germans at home to blame the heir to the throne. At all costs he must be protected from the wrath of his future subjects. Consequently the High Command invented the following story to explain away their defeat. They said that they had ordered their troops to withdraw from the Douaumont-Vaux front to prepared positions in the rear, and that this withdrawal was begun on Wednesday night (23rd October). But next day, while it was in progress, the French, favoured by foggy weather, were able to advance. Further, they explained that the forts were no longer of any use to them, and only served as excellent targets for the enemy's guns. For these and for other reasons they had decided to withdraw to a stronger line. You will see how false this statement was when I tell you that on the eve of the attack a German general issued an order to his men telling them that " our battle position must be held at all costs." Earlier in the fighting the Kaiser had referred to Fort Vaux as " the keystone of Verdun."

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The capture of Forts Douaumont and Vaux was only the first fruits of victory. Further blows were rained upon the Germans, and ground was continually gained. The shaded part of the map on page 317 shows you how far back the Germans were pushed before the close of the year. When the French troops went forward again on 3rd November, they actually reached the position which they had occupied in the preceding March. Between 24th October and 3rd November they had won back all the ground which had taken the Germans nine months of struggle to secure. In addition, they had taken thousands of prisoners, many guns, and large quantities of stores.

Though the year was now drawing to its close, the French had not concluded their offensive. On 12th December, four days after the Germans offered to conclude peace on excellent terms for themselves, they struck again, and gave the best of all replies to Bethmann-Hollweg's boast that the German line was unshakable. When the operation came to an end, on the 18th, the French were able to announce that on a front of six miles the enemy line had been crushed in to a depth of 2½ miles, and that on the first day of the battle 7,500 prisoners had been taken. The victors might have pushed on further had they so wished ; but General Nivelle thought it prudent to halt and strengthen the positions already won. He could afford to wait until the following spring before attempting to thrust the Germans out of the strong line in which they were now installed.

General Nivelle bade farewell to his command on the afternoon of 17th December ; he had been appointed to succeed General Joffre as Commander-in-Chief. To the general who had borne the heat and burden of the dark, dread days before the tide turned a new post was assigned : he became the chief war-adviser to the French Cabinet. Later on the old dignity—Marshal of France—was revived, and was conferred upon him.

General Nivelle left Verdun in the hour of victory, but without knowing the full extent of his victory. Between 24th October and the close of the year 1916 the French had captured 11,387 prisoners, 115 guns, 44 mine-throwers, 107 machine guns, and a vast store of supplies.

The battle of Verdun began on February 22, 1916. By the beginning of July the Germans were only three miles from the city which they so greatly coveted. By the close of the year 1916 they had been forced back almost to the position from which they started. Their defeat was patent to all the world ; nothing could conceal it. Early in the year 1917 von Hindenburg confessed it, and spoke bitterly of the grave loss of life which the Verdun campaign had entailed.

An Airedale Terrier on Night Duty with a French Soldier listening for the Enemy.

(*By permission of The Illustrated London News.*)

Dogs can be trained to serve either as watch dogs, patrol dogs, messengers, ambulance dogs, or pack dogs. This dog, trained by Major Richardson, nosed out a German listening-post which had escaped notice for two months. Fire rockets were sent up in the direction to which the dog "pointed," and thus Germans were discovered near the French lines.

CHAPTER XXIX.

SOLDIERS' STORIES OF THE FIGHTING AT VERDUN.

AN American journalist who returned from Verdun towards the close of November published a very clear account of the method of attack which the French adopted in the battles described in the preceding chapter. Here is the gist of his article :—

"I heard at first-hand how the Froide Terre * and Douaumont had been retaken. . . . I got the story from too many mouths—white teeth flashing and bright eyes fired again—to put it directly into the words of any one. Sitting around an alcohol stove, lighted to make us chocolate, there were two privates, a sergeant with a telephone receiver to his ear, a handsome young captain, two other American correspondents, and myself.

"We took up the tale from the hour when the big attack began. At this time Fort Souville had already been retaken, and the slow progress of the summer had brought back into French hands the gradual slope towards the watery plain of the Woëvre, including the village of Fleury. . . . It was necessary first to dislodge the Germans from the Froide Terre; no easy task, considering their occupation of two forts, their numerous shelters, and their complete system of trenches. But the French did it, and did it in four hours, once their heavy artillery had prepared the way. . . . Up to this time the French had been handicapped by the lack of heavy artillery. Now they had it in plenty, and General Mangin felt rightly that he could blow the Germans off Froide Terre ridge. He began with an artillery fire that spared no square inch of the ridge. It required more than a million shells, but the destruction was complete.

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* See Vol. V., p. 141.

"The work was finished; the attack began. The earth in front of the French troops no longer showed a piece of barbed wire or a trench. The defenders crouched in shell-craters or in dug-outs. Over them swept a curtain of French fire from the 75's and the 105's. The first line of the French attacking infantry was not very thick, but it was so far forward that it was really under the edge of its own curtain of fire. Of the 20,000 Germans in the first line of defence, not one escaped.

"Immediately behind the heroic first line came the 'cleaners of the trenches.' Their business is first to prevent the first line being shot in the back, and then to make prisoners. Behind the 'cleaners of the trenches' came the main body of infantry, supported by big machine guns. The attack up the hill was fixed for a certain minute, and at that minute a curtain of fire fell just before the first French line. Every minute it moved forward nearly eighty feet. The commanders of the artillery two or three miles back, and the commanders of the first, second, and third lines of infantry worked with their eyes on their watches. Minute by minute the line swept forward, eighty feet at a time. There could be no hitch, no delay. Once the curtain of fire descended, it had to sweep up over the ridge, and the men behind it had to follow on.

"It was, of course, possible for the Germans to bring up reinforcements and meet the first French line under their curtain of fire. It was also possible for them to prevent the French from bringing up their third line by creating a barrier fire so intense as to give the troops no chance of coming through it alive; but either they did not have the troops for this purpose, or they did not wish to see them wiped out under the French curtain-fire. The French met resistance, and reinforcements were brought up, but not in sufficient numbers to slacken that steady pace of eighty feet a minute. That speed may not seem much, but it was made up and down over shell-craters."

The French were successful in their attack because they had prepared to the last detail, and had put into it their best brain work. In respect of big guns, the Germans had all the advantage over the French at the beginning. When the war broke out they had 3,500 pieces of heavy artillery. The sons of France paid dearly because their army was not adequately supplied with heavy artillery. The Crown Prince, having plenty of big guns and great stores of munitions, began his attack on the heights to the east of Verdun on February 22, 1916, and in four days reached Douaumont and beyond. The Kaiser praised his "brave Brandenburgers" for doing it; but they owed their success chiefly to the fierce and continuous artillery fire thrown out in front of them. An army less brave and devoted than the French would not have stood and died there. Verdun without adequate heavy artillery was looked upon by the French army as almost certain death for the defenders.

The original defence of Verdun did not cost the French as much as the attack cost the Germans, because the French .75 is a marvellous gun. The Germans brought up twenty-two divisions of 20,000 each before Verdun by the 1st of July. After that time the necessity of shifting divisions of the German army to the Somme stopped continuous attacks. Out of 440,000 men who began the attack on Verdun, between 160,000 and 175,000 were lost. The casualties of Verdun have been figured at as high as a million.

The French were able to do nothing effective until they were in a position to bring up new heavy artillery equal to that of the Germans. After six months, when they were fully supplied, their big guns destroyed every protection that could be made, and created a curtain of fire more intense than that of the Germans. The enemy advanced in massed attacks. Not so the French. They pushed forward in three separate lines, and thus offered a poor target for the German guns.

The Germans discovered that the only possible defences against this kind of attack were the deep dug-out and the underground fort. Trenches and barbed wire were useless. Nor could disconnected forts such as Thiaumont, Douaumont, and Vaux hold out. The Germans found that when their trenches were blown to bits, and their few survivors were cornered in shelters, the French lines swept round three sides of the forts, and they had to leave them or surrender. In Douaumont they surrendered, but in Vaux they profited by the lesson of the week before, and left while there was still time.

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How effective in life-saving the new method proved appears from a comparison of the losses in Artois and Champagne with those in the attack on the Douaumont-Vaux line. In former offensives each regiment lost some hundreds of men.

At Verdun a regiment had only fifteen wounded. One brigade in the whole advance of a mile and a half had but one casualty. On the other hand, the number of prisoners taken was strikingly large. A French " Eye-Witness " tells us that the whole hill was covered with gray cloaks. One regiment alone took 1,545 prisoners in a single day. An officer of another regiment called out, " Leave us some." But the colonel replied, " Come and help me to count mine." It was noticed that the Germans who surrendered no longer cried " Kamerad ! " but " Pardon ! Mercy ! " Some of them went on their knees and prayed, " Long live France ! "

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Parisians were delighted with the coolness of a certain Captain Lassouquere, who led his company to the attack on Douaumont. Just before the time set for the men to leave their trenches, Captain Lassouquere mounted the parapet, and, fixing his eyeglass in his eye, walked calmly up and down with a cane in his hand. When the precise moment arrived he turned quietly to his men and said in an even tone of voice, " All right, my children. We're off ! " As the men advanced the captain walked in front of them twisting his cane like a Parisian dandy on the Boulevards. When, however, the men reached the German trenches, and the artillery barrage leaped forward, leaving the position exposed for attack, the captain threw aside his cane, drew his revolver, and gave the order, " Forward, my children ! " A few moments later his men were masters of the enemy's position, and all the defenders were either dead or prisoners.

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In what is known as the " Lady's Ravine " the Germans had dug a subterranean village which held two battalions. About one o'clock, the hour of repose in Germany, the occupants were enjoying a comfortable doze when the Zouaves, who seemed to have fallen from the sky with the shells, suddenly descended among them. When the gay French warriors found the Boches sitting up and rubbing their eyes, they broke into roars of laughter. Small groups of the enemy tried to resist, but a few grenades settled them, and brought the others to their senses. They flung down their arms and held up their hands.

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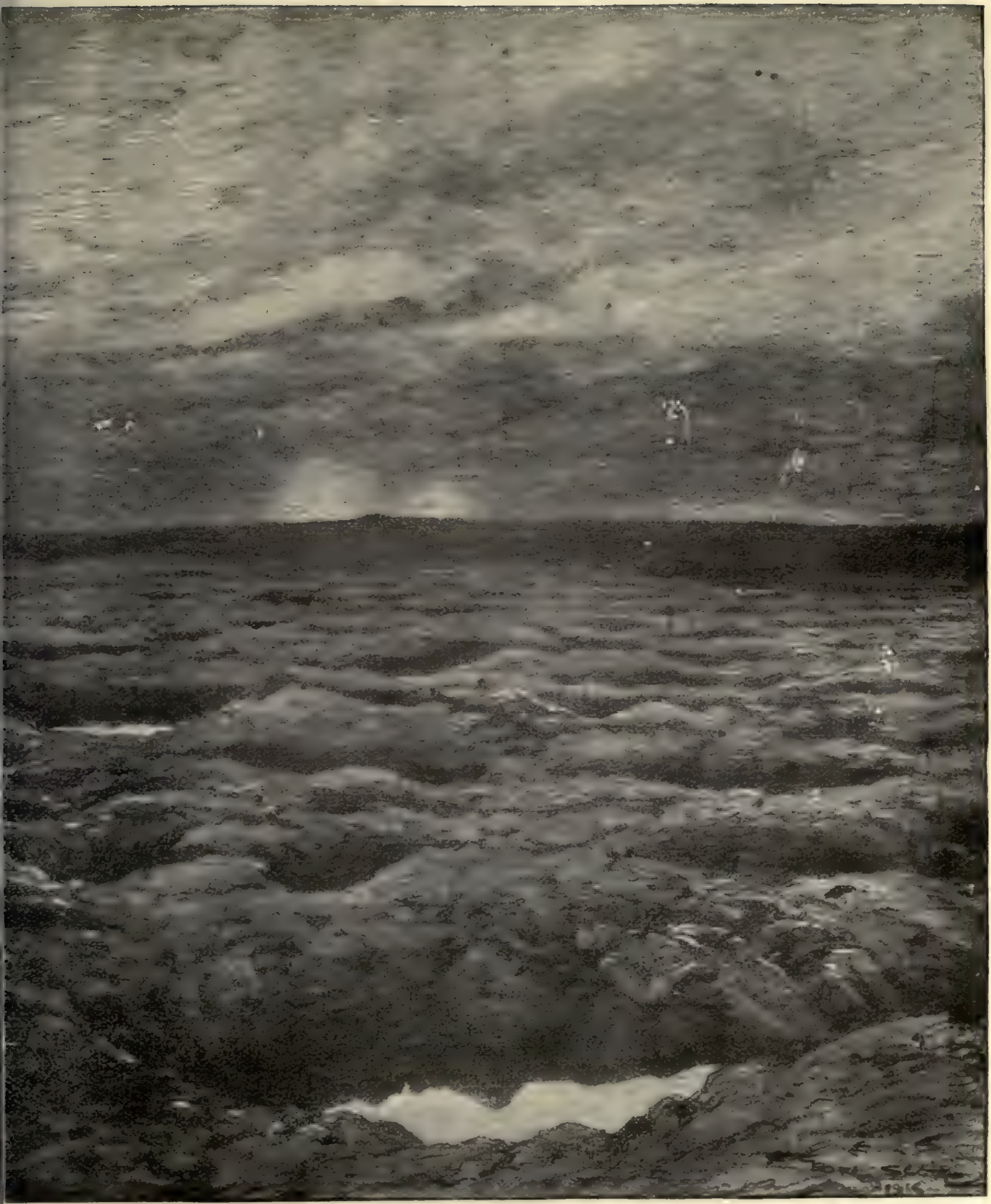
A French Outpost on the Battlefield.

(From the picture by M. Georges Scott.

The constant storm of shells wiped out everything in the neighbourhood of the fort, and this picture
advanced. A correspondent says: "The ground is torn to pieces, and some of the shell-holes contain



The desolation of Douaumont.

By permission of The Sphere.)

shows the desolate scene which now meets the eye. It was over this shell-pitted ground that the French
eight feet or more of water. If you fall into one you will be drowned, unless some one can pull you out."

A correspondent, describing a visit to the fort of Douaumont a short time after its capture, says: " The commandant of Douaumont was quite a young man, and though his face was drawn and tired with the heavy burden laid upon him, he seemed to possess a boundless stock of energy. He took us round his domain, which was still hung with the notices of the conquered enemy. Electricity had been installed by the Germans, so the whole fort could be brilliantly lighted. The commandant, whose very appearance, and the affectionate tone in which he called his men ' my children,' seemed to give fresh life and energy to the garrison, had one idea, and that was to make the fort impregnable. The enemy was only four hundred yards away, but if he dared to attack Douaumont again, he would be received by his own machine guns placed at far better points of vantage. The fort was already provided with food and water, and was quite ready to stand a siege."

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The night after the capture of the fort a strange adventure befell Sergeant Julien. He went off with some men of the Army Service Corps, and strayed during the night among the shell-holes. He came upon a detachment which he took for a patrol of colonials. It was, however, a party of Germans. They fired at him with their rifles, and, missing him, flung themselves upon him, bound him hand and foot, and threw him in a sap, where he fell, more dead than alive. He was then pushed into a lighted chamber, where dinner was being served. Some officers seated at a table questioned him, and as he hesitated, pressed him to reply. The prisoner said, " Let us first know where we are." " You are in the Lady's Ravine," answered one of the officers. " All right," said the sergeant; " I'll tell you your position. Thiaumont is in our hands, and we have held Douaumont since this afternoon. Consequently you are my prisoners." The Germans asked for further details, and when they had received them, the chief officer ordered his soldiers to lay down their arms. There were two hundred of them; their dug-out had been overlooked in the cleaning-up. Sergeant Julien went back to the French lines with a whole company of prisoners and six machine guns.

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Fort Douaumont, as you know, was so smashed up by French gun-fire that it did not resemble a fort at all. The troops which first reached it thought it was a quarry which they had been set to capture. As they advanced they reached a deep hole, and one man said, " Here is our quarry. Look at all those stones there." Another man replied, " I think not. Have you ever seen a quarry with a window in its side ? Look at that window up there." Quite by accident they had discovered the moat of Douaumont Fort, and the stones which the first man had seen were fragments of masonry torn from their places by high explosives.

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The same correspondent gives us an interesting account of the three heroes of Verdun—General Nivelle, General Petain, and General Mangin. General Nivelle, he says, " is short and thick-set, with a merry smile and a pretty wit, and his sturdy shoulders seem capable of bearing lightly the heaviest burden. General Petain, erect, fine-featured, with a fierce moustache, was the man who brought fresh hope in February 1916 to the hard-tried troops at Verdun. At that time I remember seeing him walk with his springy, confident step across the muddy street of the sordid village in which his headquarters were. An officer who was with me at the time said, " Who could doubt, seeing Petain, that Verdun will never fall ? "

General Mangin has always reminded me, so far as appearance goes, of one of those soldiers of a former age who won great victories and loved to foster arts and learning. He is very dark, and his face is alive with swift intelligence and energy. His energy and his power of organization have played a most important part in the two victories that have wrested from the Germans almost all the ground they gained at a cost of over half a million men.

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On page 319 you will see a picture of Paul Dumont, a young Parisian of twenty-one who was the first to enter Douaumont Fort after its recapture on 24th October. When volunteers were asked for, Dumont, with four men and a sergeant, promptly stepped forward. He and his comrades crept through barbed wire and entered the fort. In a narrow passage Dumont came upon a party of the enemy. At once he held a bomb aloft and shouted, " Surrender ! " The Germans could only advance towards him one at a time, and they knew that he had the power to destroy them. So twenty-four privates and three officers, including the major who commanded the fort, held up their hands. When the young hero returned to his home in a suburb of Paris his neighbours gave him a great reception.

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The French airmen played a great part in the fighting. A correspondent tells us that throughout the day he never saw a single German aeroplane or a single French anti-aircraft gun in action. On the other hand, there were many more French aeroplanes in the air than it was possible to count. The airmen were everywhere, skimming a few hundred feet above the heads of French infantry, and darting back from the smoke clouds, against which their signal rockets glittered like tinsel stars. Like homing pigeons they sped back to the posts of command and circled round above them to drop their messages. "Just before the assault I saw one aviator out of sheer lightness of heart looping the loop over a general's headquarters.

"On the French side there were many kite balloons in the air. Occasionally a drift of cloud would pass over them and obscure their view, but they were able to render valuable service in directing the artillery fire. Not till the end of the afternoon did an enemy balloon dare to put in an appearance. It was well behind the lines, but its shrift was short. Suddenly, in mid-air, where it had been, eddies of gray smoke floated like a summer cloud. Through my glasses I saw something black fall from the smoke headlong to the ground. Overhead an aeroplane, no more than a black dot, was winging its way back to our lines. Its work had been done. It had set the German balloon on fire, and the hydrogen still burnt away aloft after envelope, car, and observer had plunged down to destruction. During the rest of the afternoon no other balloon dared to show itself."

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During the fighting in front of Verdun the Germans constantly hurled shells upon the city, but in spite of the heavy bombardment they could not prevent the French from using it as a great military centre. After eight months of shelling, the old works which Vauban had erected round the city, and the citadel which formed its final rallying-point, were practically unharmed. A correspondent tells us that in the interior of the citadel there were galleries more than four miles long, in which a large number of men could be housed and a vast amount of provisions stored. Even if the Germans had been able to besiege the city, the citadel would have been able to hold out a long time. It could not have been destroyed by bombardment, because it was now an underground fortress, protected in many places by about fifteen yards of solid rock. General Dubois declared: "You could no more break it down by bombardment than you could smash the Crystal Palace windows with a pea-shooter." The vaults of the citadel have a special interest for us. During the Napoleonic wars many British prisoners were confined in them.

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A lady who visited Verdun while it was under fire says: "It would be useless to pretend that one entered Verdun without emotion—Verdun, sorely stricken, yet living, kept alive by the unconquerable soul of the soldiers of France, whilst her wounds are daily treated and healed by the skill of her generals. A white city of desolation, scorched and battered, yet the brightest jewel in the crown of France's glory. . . . We proceeded to a terrace overlooking the lower part of the town, and witnessed a duel between the French and German artillery. The French soldiers off duty should have been resting in the caves and dug-outs, but most of them were on the terraces, smoking and watching the effects of the fire. I inquired of one poilu whether he would be glad to leave Verdun, and he laughingly replied, 'One might be worse off than here. This is the time of year that in peace times I should have been staying in the country with my mother-in-law!'"

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The same lady saw the wounded in hospital, and praised their uncomplaining patience without stint. "We learned to love them," she says, "for their kindness to each other. . . . Lions to fight, ever ready to answer to the call for the defence of their country, yet these men of France are tender and gentle. In one hospital through which I passed there was a baby. It was a military hospital, and no civilian had any right to be there; but the medical officers who inspected the hospital were remarkably blind—none of them could ever see the baby. One of the soldiers passing through a bombarded village saw a little body lying in the mud, and although he believed the child to be dead, he stooped down and picked it up.

" Soldier and baby were sent to the hospital together. The doctors operated on the baby, and took a piece of shrapnel from its back, and, once well and strong, it became the lord and master and king of all that it surveyed. When it woke in the morning it would call ' Papa,' and twenty fathers answered to its call. All the pent-up love of the men for their own little ones from whom they had been parted so long was lavished on the tiny stranger. As the shadows fell one saw the rough soldier who had brought it in walking up and down the ward with the child in his arms, crooning the ' Marseillaise,' until the tired little eyes closed. . . .

" What we must remember is that the rough soldier, himself blinded with blood and mud, uncertain whether he would ever reach a point of safety, yet had time to stoop and pick that little flower of France and save it from being crushed beneath the cannon wheels. I told General Nivelle that the hospital staff intended to keep the child for the soldier until after the end of the war, and we all hoped that he might grow up to the glory of France and to the eternal honour of the tender-hearted fighter who had rescued him."

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On 13th September the sovereigns of the Allies paid homage to the glorious resistance of Verdun. President Poincaré, accompanied by Generals Joffre, Petain, Nivelle, and Dubois, visited the city, and in the presence of the mayor, town councillors, and representatives of the Allies, made a noble speech, in which he said that they had met to offer a tribute to the brave men who had saved the world, and to the proud city which had warded off so many blows against liberty. He then handed to the mayor the crosses awarded by the sovereigns of the Allies and the numerous foreign decorations which had been so nobly won by the defenders of the city.

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In days to come the story of Verdun will be the epic of France, and the drear, stark uplands that overlook the " inviolate city " will be for ever her holy of holies. Never in all her long, warlike history has France lacked sons proud and happy to die for her ; but at Verdun they went to their death with a fortitude that was truly sublime. Not, as of yore, were they fighting for lands, for riches, for glory. Those days had passed ; peace was in their hearts, and there was no challenge

Prisoners from Thiaumont at Verdun Cathedral.

(By permission of The Illustrated London News.)

on their lips. But the unprovoked onslaught of mighty foes, drunk with the lust of power and eager for the ruin of their land, awakened in a flash that passionate love of country which burns in every Frenchman's breast. Rather than see France perish, they were ready to spill their last drop of blood. Rather than see her sink into slavery, they were prepared to go down with her. They were, one and all, ready to die that France might live, that a purer, nobler freedom might spring from their ashes. And so they fell with a prayer for France on their lips. If the blood of heroes could fertilize the waste, the Heights of the Meuse would be a land of Sharon, blossoming with a tricolour of fair flowers—the red rose of undying courage, the lily of unstained devotion, the forget-me-not of sad but glorious memory.

CHAPTER XXX.

HOW THE SERBIANS RE-ENTERED SERBIA.

FOR more than seven hundred pages of this record you have heard nothing of the Allied armies in Macedonia. In the final chapter of Volume IV. I told you how the Allies sent a large force to occupy the port of Salonika. Let me recall the story.

You will remember that the brave little country of Serbia was the first to feel the brunt of that warfare which soon spread throughout Europe like a forest fire. To many people it was a mystery why the Kaiser should have chosen Serbia as the first country to be assailed. We in Britain knew well that the reasons which Austria gave for declaring war on Serbia were not the real reasons. You will remember that an Austrian archduke had been murdered on Austrian territory by Austrian subjects, and that the blame was laid on the Serbian Government, which was said to have stirred up the people of Bosnia against Austria. A Note was drawn up for the express purpose of bringing about war, and almost immediately the Austrians began to bombard Belgrade.

We now know why the Kaiser egged on Austria to fight Serbia. One of his great dreams of empire was to extend German rule from Heligoland to Bagdad. Long before war was declared he had been making his plans for controlling the Balkans. Between Austria, his ally, and Bagdad lay three nations—Serbia, Bulgaria, and Turkey. A third nation—Greece—lay still further south and on the flank of Asia Minor. If Germany was to be all-powerful in the Balkans and in Asia Minor, Greece also must be her ally.

The Kaiser had already turned Turkey into a German province ; the Turkish army had been trained by German officers ;

The Flight of a Nation: Serbians retreating before the Enemy's Forces.

(*From the picture by F. Matania. By permission of The Sphere.*)

German money had been lent lavishly to the Turkish Government, and German railways, irrigation works, and so forth, had been established throughout the land. The German Emperor was the real master of Turkey: he could make its army fight for him whenever he chose. You have not forgotten that he plunged Turkey into war with us as far back as November 1914. Bulgaria's greedy and treacherous German king, Ferdinand, had also been sounded, and it was certain that he would stand by the Kaiser if he were offered a sufficiently large bribe. The Greek King, Constantine, was already his tool.

A noted British scholar * who has long watched the career of Constantine says that as a young man he had no ability and little education. He was empty and selfish, and during the war against Turkey (1896) showed himself to be a coward. The Greeks were very angry with him, and his father was obliged to send him away for a time. He sent the prince to Berlin, where the Kaiser took him in hand, and trained him to work hard, to be a soldier, and to rule as a tyrant. He married the Kaiser's sister, and before long was little more than the Kaiser's puppet. The Kaiser pulled the strings; Constantine danced at his bidding.

When the Second Balkan War broke out, the Bulgarians made a sudden attack upon their former allies, the Greeks, at what they thought to be the weakest point of the Greek line. When the attack began, the Bulgarians, to their surprise, found the Greeks ready to meet them. The fact was that the Kaiser, who had arranged the whole plan of the Bulgarian campaign, had secretly told Constantine all about the intended attack, and had given him instructions how to meet it. The consequence was that the Greek King won a great victory, and became the idol of his people, who thereafter considered him a heaven-born general. You can now understand how completely Constantine was in the Kaiser's power. He was the German Emperor's fervent admirer and his brother-in-law, and he owed all his popularity to him.

Turkey, Bulgaria, and Greece were thus in the Kaiser's clutches. Remained the little kingdom of Serbia, which refused to bow the knee to the German. Serbia lay as a little solid block between the Central Powers and their tools further

* Sir William Ramsay, in *Land and Water*.

south. Before the Austrians and Germans could join hands with their friends they had to hack a road through Serbia. It was important that no time should be lost in uniting all the partners in the Kaiser's unholy alliance, and for this reason Austria was instructed to make war upon Serbia.

You will remember that Serbia was ill prepared to fight. She had not recovered from the Balkan wars ; she had little money with which to buy munitions and equipment ; and she was cut off from her big friend Russia, and from France and Britain. Nevertheless her sons fought with superb courage. Three times the Austrians invaded the country, and three times they were flung out again. But every victory cost the Serbs dear. The wastage of war was very heavy, and when pestilence and disease began to stalk the land, they knew that without assistance they could not resist much longer.

I have already told you (page 394, Vol. IV.) why the Allies did not hasten to the defence of the Serbians. The great Greek Premier, Venizelos, of whom we shall hear more on a later page, believed that Greece was in honour bound to stand by Serbia, because a treaty had been made in the year 1913 by which the two countries pledged themselves to help each other in case of war. Venizelos asked France and Britain if they were prepared to furnish 150,000 troops should Greece decide to go to the assistance of Serbia. Towards the end of September 1915 the Allies agreed to furnish these troops, and the Greek army began to mobilize. I shall tell you later how Constantine set himself to thwart Venizelos in every possible way, and how he actually surrendered some of his troops to Bulgaria, so that they should not fight against the friends of his brother-in-law.

The Allies began to land troops at the Greek port of Salonika in the first week of October 1915. Then the Kaiser called upon Bulgaria to join him, and Austrian, German, and Bulgarian troops invaded Serbia. They crossed the frontier at five separate points, and began a great encircling movement against the weak and sorely distressed Serbian army, which at this time did not number more than 150,000 men. Before the Allies at Salonika were ready to take the field the Kaiser had struck his blow.

The Serbian army could not resist the overwhelming onset of the Germans, Austrians, and Bulgars. Had it attempted to do so, it would have been surrounded and probably destroyed as a fighting force. Nothing could save the soldiers of

Serbia but a retreat, across the wild hills of Montenegro and the dreary wilderness of Albania, to the sea, where the ships of the Allies were waiting to receive and succour them. By the 26th of October they had begun their retreat.

At this moment the mothers of Serbia rose to a height of patriotism and self-sacrifice that has never been equalled in any age or country. In order to preserve the manhood of Serbia, so that their dearly-loved country might not be blotted out of the book of nations, they sent their boys to follow the army, feeling sure that the British, the French, and the Italians would take care of them until Serbia was free once more. They gave their boys food and clothing and money, bade them a tender farewell, and when they had departed sat down broken-hearted to mourn for those whom they were never likely to see again.

I want you to admire and pity these splendid women. It tore their hearts to part with their boys, but they loved their country dearer than their own sons. They had to choose between their love for their children and their love for their native land. They chose to sacrifice their hearts upon the altar of their country. Can you think of a nobler choice?

From all parts of the land boys set out on foot to join the retreating army. You must imagine long trails of men, women, and children trudging wearily across the sterile mountains, footsore, hungry, and heavy at heart. You must imagine the guns abandoned and the wheeled vehicles breaking down on the steep and rugged tracks. You must think of the children dying of hunger and fatigue, and the older men falling by the wayside. Then you must picture the snowstorms and the bitter frost, the boys huddling together at night for warmth, and lifting themselves painfully from their hard couch in the morning to continue their pilgrimage of woe. Some never rose at all; they never woke again. The very elements were kinder to them than their foes. The bitter cold gave them painless death; their enemies harried them on to greater misery and more terrible suffering.

On and on they went, in ever-lessening numbers, struggling up the steep hills, skirting precipices, over which some of them fell, giddy with hunger and fatigue; fording swollen torrents which swept many of them away; on and on, until the gaunt, famished lads reached Albania, where a new horror awaited them.

The robbers who infest that country murdered many of them for the sake of their few pitiful rags and the coins in their pockets. On and on they stumbled, now sadly reduced in numbers, until suddenly their bleared eyes gleamed, and their parched lips parted with a feeble cry of joy. Before them was the sea! The end of their awful suffering was at hand.

But in the port of Valona, which they now entered, there was little food, and there were no hospitals. Many of the boys who had struggled so far died within sight of the sea.

Thirty thousand lads began that retreat; only seven thousand reached the coast. Twenty-three thousand or more perished by the way. For months afterwards the hills of Serbia and Albania were strewn with the bones of martyred children, all sacrificed to the ambition of an imperial fiend, lusting to reign over the whole earth. There is no more horrible tragedy in all the history of the war.

The miserable refugees who had survived the retreat were carried to the beautiful island of Corfu, where they were carefully tended and restored to health. Many of the boys were afterwards taken to Corsica, and later on some of them were transferred to France and to Great Britain. As you know, the readers and friends of this work adopted ten of them for a year. A happy home was provided for them in Edinburgh, and free education was granted to them by the governors of George Heriot's School. In November 1916 fifteen other Serbian boys joined the Edinburgh colony. They were all fine lads, simple, brave, and clever, eager to learn, and keen at games, especially at football. They soon won the affection of all who had to do with them, and made rapid progress in English. It was felt that when Serbia was recovered from the enemy, and the lads were able to return home, they would be the friends of Britain, and do something to strengthen the bonds which had been forged between the two nations by their alliance in war.

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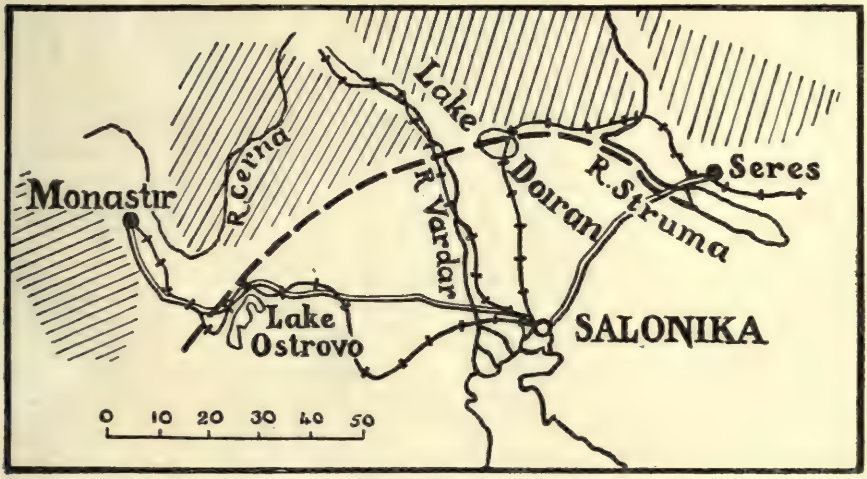
The Serbian soldiers in Corfu were rested, reorganized, and fitted out anew. Attired in British uniforms, of which they were very proud, they were transported to Salonika. I have already told you how the Allies pushed forward from Salonika in the hope of relieving the retreating Serbians (Vol. V., pp. 27–30). They came within twelve miles of a heroic rearguard which was holding the Babuna Pass; but before they could make a further advance, the Serbs were forced to retire into Albania. The Allies, unable to join up with the Serbs, decided to retire to Salonika and there construct a great fortified camp from which they could invade the Balkans when occasion offered. For nearly a whole year they marked time in this camp, and it was only when Rumania declared war that General Sarrail began to make a move. His object was to capture the Serbian town of Monastir and to weaken the Bulgarian army, so that a northward advance might be made.

Before I tell you the story of the advance into Serbia, let us be clear as to the position of the Allies before it began. Here is a sketch-map which will help us. You will notice that General Sarrail was holding a front which curved from the Lower Struma on the east to Lake Doiran, and then swung round to the neighbourhood of Lake Ostrovo. On the right towards the Struma the British held the line; British, French, and Serbians defended the centre; while French, Serbians, and Russians, with some Italians, were on the left, facing Monastir. Behind this line General Sarrail had three railways, which enabled him to move his troops very rapidly to any part of his front.



The army which faced him consisted mainly of Bulgars, with whom were Austro-Hungarians, Prussians, and a large

British repelling a Counter-attack on the Road to Seres. [*By permission of The Sphere.*

force of German and Austrian artillery. In all it amounted to about eleven divisions—that is, about two-thirds of all the enemy forces south of the Danube. The Bulgar generals knew the date on which the Allies meant to attack, so they determined to be beforehand. During the last days of August and the first days of September 1916 they struck hard against the Serbians near Lake Ostrovo, bombarded the centre near Lake Doiran, and massed in great strength in front of the British positions along the Struma. They also occupied the Greek port of Kavala.

In order to make clear what happened when the Allies began their offensive, I will divide the operations into two parts: (1) from 11th September to 14th October; (2) from the middle of October to the middle of November.

Throughout the whole of 12th and 13th September British artillery hammered hard at what was known as Machine-Gun Hill, the centre of the positions which they were to capture. The bombardment was the heaviest which had yet been carried out on the Macedonian front. At ten o'clock on the night of the 13th, while the bombardment was still going on, strong patrols went forward on our right flank, in order to discover whether the enemy's wire had been sufficiently broken to enable a general advance to be made. The patrols reported that the wire had been well smashed, and at 1.15 a.m. our first waves were sent over the parapets.

> "Two of the groups of the main body started off, stooping, crawling, pausing, and frequently lying down for rest, but gradually getting nearer to Machine-Gun Hill, in spite of shells and rifle-fire. At two exactly the fire from the hill swelled suddenly to a louder rattle. Machine guns jabbered all along the line; flares soared up and dropped down again; red and green bars of fire shot into the air as signals to the artillery of the one side or the other; the flashes of rifle-fire flickered across the sky like summer lightning; and the flames of shells lit up the night. Then the guns lifted on to the hills behind the enemy's main line in order to form a barrage.
>
> "All this lasted till just after 2.30. Then suddenly came silence. 'We've got it,' said an officer in the observation post; and he was right, for at 2.40 a report was received that the position had been captured, and Machine-Gun Hill was ours. Nearly all the enemy had bolted, while the rest were under the cover of dug-outs, and those who would not surrender were being bombed or bayoneted out of them. While this was going on, some Germans who had been sent up to help in rebuilding the destroyed parapets suddenly appeared in the trench, not knowing that it had been taken, and found our men busy shifting the sand-bags from one side to

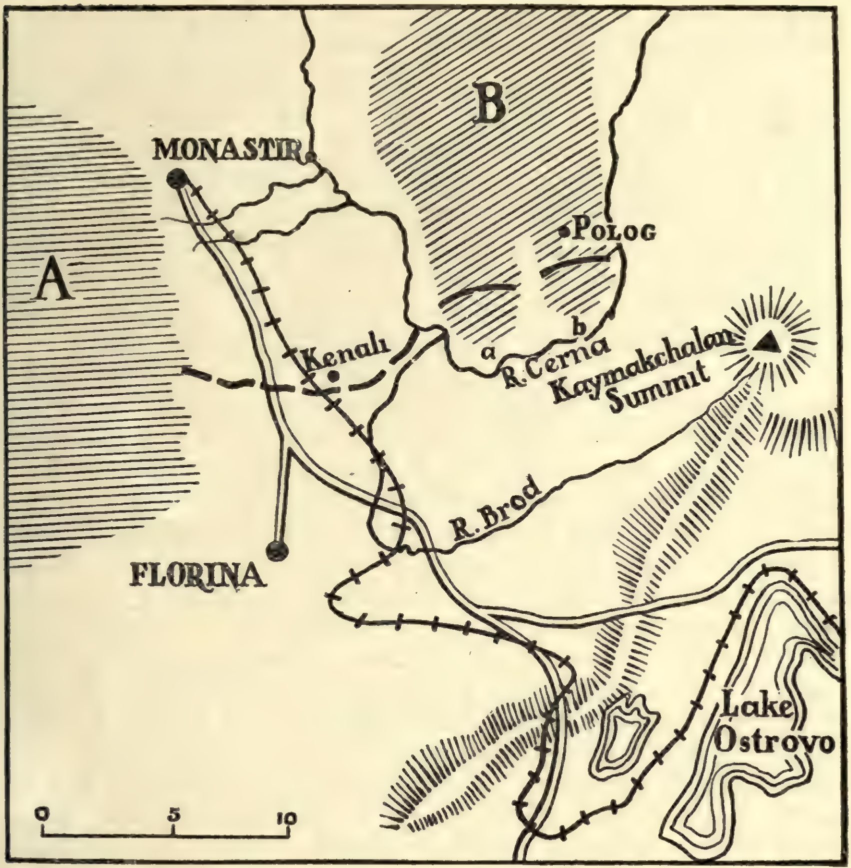
the other. They were at once made prisoners, and brought the total captures to sixty, with nine machine guns."

During the night the enemy shelled the positions from which they had been thrust, and attempted a counter-attack, but were driven back. At daybreak every enemy battery that could reach Machine-Gun Hill started to pound the lost trenches. All that day and the following night shelling and fighting went on almost without pause. About midnight a sudden British cheer rang out. A successful charge had been made; the hill was cleared of the enemy.

During the four days occupied by these events the enemy was led to believe that the main attack was going to take place in the centre and on the Allied right. As a matter of fact, it was arranged to take place on their left, in the direction of Monastir. Let us turn to this section of the Allied line and survey the ground over which the advance was to be made.

Here is a sketch-map, which you must study carefully. Between Lake Ostrovo and the little town of Florina you see the first obstacle to the Serbian advance. It consists of a long ridge ending on the east in the summit of Kaymakchalan, which rises some six thousand feet above the level of the surrounding country. You notice that the little river Brod rises on the slopes of the summit, and runs a few miles towards the south-west, and then swings northward to join the Cerna, or Black River, which makes a big bend round the mountain mass marked B. The river Brod forms the second obstacle to an advance on Monastir; the others I will deal with when we come to them.

When the Bulgarian offensive began, outposts of Serbians and volunteers of Serbian blood from other countries were holding the little town of Florina. They were swept aside by the Bulgars, who now pushed forward, some thirty thousand strong. On the ridge the main body of the Serbs met them, and a furious fight took place. Towards evening six Bulgar battalions made a massed attack, and the Serbians had to fall back before them. Next day there was another fierce struggle, and the Serbian left had to withdraw to a range skirting Lake Ostrovo. There, however, they stood firm, and on a hill in this district one of the most deadly struggles of the war took place. There was no time to dig trenches; the Serbs had to



Sketch-map to illustrate the Allied advance on Monastir.

Notice, to the north and west of Lake Ostrovo, the ridge which culminates in the summit of Kaymakchalan. This was the first obstacle to be overcome. The next was the line of the river Brod. Then the Cerna was crossed, and the spur *b* was captured. When the Bulgars were driven by flank fire from *a*, the lines of Kenali, which had successfully resisted frontal attacks by the French, were turned. The capture of two heights northward of the line due east from Monastir enabled the Allies to threaten the enemy's line of retreat. Monastir was therefore abandoned. It was entered by the Allies on the morning of November 13, 1916.

defend themselves in shallow pits behind low parapets of stones.

" The fight swayed to and fro about these defences. Men fought with bayonets, bombs, knives, and bare hands, clutching, clawing, and even biting one another in their frenzy. For a short spell the Bulgars won a foothold; but the Serbs drove them back, and finally held the hill for the Allies. Their losses were very great, but the Bulgarian losses were as five to one compared with theirs. The Bulgarian advance broke upon this hill, and with this failure their attacks ceased."

On Friday, 15th September, the Serbs were strongly reinforced, and their advance began. They struck northward from Lake Ostrovo, captured the ridge in front of Florina, and threw the Bulgarians back beyond it towards the town. Next day they descended into the plain, and reached the line of the river Brod. The Bulgars failed to make a stand, and two days later, at ten o'clock in the morning of Monday, 18th September, the French and Serbians entered Florina. By the evening of the next day the town was entirely cleared of the enemy.

Meanwhile the Serbian right wing had laid siege to the mountain summit of Kaymakchalan, across which the Serbo-Greek boundary line runs. You can scarcely imagine a stronger position than that which the Bulgars held on this mountain. The top is flat, but the slopes are very steep, and the Bulgars were so placed that it seemed as if nothing could dislodge them. On Tuesday, the 19th, however, the Serbians carried the summit, and drove the Bulgars back upon a somewhat lower shoulder towards the north-east, where they held out for a week. Four separate times they strove to win back the summit, but in vain. The final attempt was made on the 25th, when the enemy primed his soldiers with raw spirits, and sent a host of half-drunken men against the Serbian line. Three waves were thrown back by rifle and machine-gun fire, but the fourth wave entered the first line of Serbian trenches, where awful scenes of slaughter took place. After five hours of savage fighting the Bulgars were beaten off, but they still held the first line of the Serbian trenches.

On the foggy morning of the 28th, after a short and fierce shelling, the Serbs, who had crawled forward amidst the stones until they were well on their way towards their lost trenches, suddenly rose, and, advancing at a run, cleared the Bulgars out of their first and second lines in the short space of half an hour. In the third line the Bulgars made a desperate stand; but they were overcome, and all the unwounded fled to the rear, throwing away their rifles as they ran. Owing to the thick fog it was impossible for the Serbs to follow them. An entire battery of Austrian guns was captured and turned against the Bulgars, who were streaming down the steep sides of the mountain. Many prisoners were taken, and the captured trenches were found to be full of dead and wounded. In the course of this struggle the Serbs recovered a gun which they had lost, but which the Bulgars had not been able to capture. During the fighting it lay in the open between the lines. Several parties of the enemy tried to remove it, but failed to do so; Serbian sharpshooters picked them off to a man.

A fortnight was spent in repairing the road and railway from Salonika, and in bringing up heavy guns and a store of shells. Meanwhile the Serbs descended from the summit, and reached the Cerna. On the 6th and 7th of November they managed to gain a footing on the farther bank of that river; but their hold was feeble, and they were attacked again and again. By this time, however, the French in Florina were ready to strike another blow.

Turn again to the sketch-map, and notice the two mountain masses marked A and B, the one to the west and the other to the east of Monastir. Between these masses lies a sort of corridor of open country all the way to Monastir. The mass on the west rises to between four thousand and five thousand feet above the plain, and is so rugged that it is almost impassable for troops and guns. The other mass does not rise to much more than two thousand feet. You will notice that the river Cerna sweeps round it on three sides. Between these two mountain masses the Bulgars had dug line after line of trenches, strongly defended by deep wire entanglements. We may call them the Kenali lines, after the name of the village almost midway between the mountains.

The Allied airmen discovered that the Kenali lines were very strong indeed, and that the plain was criss-crossed with artificial water-channels, which might be turned into defensive positions. Nevertheless, the French determined to make a frontal attack. On 14th October, after a fierce bombardment, they pushed forward against the Kenali lines; but unhappily they could not make headway, and had to retire with heavy loss. Another attack next day was also beaten back. Thus the first period of the operations ended with the repulse of the French at the lines of Kenali.

The frontal attack having failed, the Allies now decided to try to turn the lines by an advance over the mountains on the east. If they could manage to push across the great loop of the Cerna and capture the higher ground beyond, they would be able to get behind the Kenali lines, which had so far defied them. But before such a plan could succeed there would have to be much severe fighting. To cross the Cerna would not be easy, but to hew a path across the mountains would require all the skill and determination that the Allies could command.

Before you can understand the operations which led to the capture of Monastir, you must have clear ideas about the mountain mass which is looped round by the Cerna. It has been likened to the Sphinx, that great stone monument which has stood for ages by the side of the Pyramids, not far from Cairo in Egypt. Here is a little picture of it. Notice its two paws. These represent two lower spurs, which are thrust out southward from the main mass of the mountain. The higher ground behind the spurs is represented by the body of the Sphinx. Really, the spurs do not much resemble paws, because each of them rises to a ridge which runs up irregularly to the big height behind. The ridge on the spur marked *a* rises a thousand feet above the level of the Cerna; that on the spur marked *b* is lower.

By this time I think you have decided in your own mind that the Allies were going to try to carry the ridge of the spur marked *b*—the Chuke Ridge, as it is called, because it is lower than the other. You are right, but you must understand that it was really the more difficult of the two. It is covered with bare, steep rocks, which make progress very difficult. Nevertheless these "scars," as they are called in the north of England, were something of an advantage to the attackers: they enabled them to hide their guns, and thus to play upon the open moor of the spur marked *a*.

Now, before the second period of the operations could begin, the Allies had much work to do. They had to bring the French artillery from the left to the right of the Serbian army, and meanwhile had to hold the left wing of the Bulgars a hundred miles away to the east, and prevent them from sending troops to reinforce their right wing. The latter task was the work of the British. Every time the Bulgars tried to withdraw men to help their threatened right the British sprang forward and struck so hard that the Bulgars dared not weaken their forces in that part of the line. After one action no fewer than 1,500 Bulgarian dead were counted in front of the British trenches.

From the middle of October to the early days of November the troops on the west, in front of Monastir, were busy making preparations for their advance. The bridgeheads which the Serbians had won across the Cerna were strengthened, and in the second week of November all was ready. On Friday, 10th November, the Serbian infantry pushed forward to the spurs overlooking the river. In the morning and afternoon of that day the French guns in large numbers began a fierce bombardment of the village of Polog, which stands in the middle of the Chuke heights. At 11 a.m. General Mistrich, the Serbian general, sent his infantry, already across the river, to storm the ridge. The Serbs pushed onwards and upwards, some pressing round the sides of the hill, others climbing in a bee line. The Allied guns continued to play on the enemy's positions until the climbing-line was near the top. The Bulgarians resisted fiercely; but the Serbians were full of dash and fire, for once more they were treading the soil of their own country.

By 2 p.m. all the enemy's outlying positions were captured; and just as darkness was falling the Bulgarians on the topmost heights began to waver, and finally broke and fled down the northward slopes, leaving behind them 600 prisoners, seventeen guns, and much war material. Next day the Serbs were masters of the village of Polog, and another thousand prisoners and eight heavy guns were captured. The Chuke Ridge had been won, and the fate of Monastir was now trembling in the balance.

On Sunday, 11th November, the Bulgars and their German comrades found themselves obliged to fall back all along the line of the eastern Cerna. They still held on to their trenches on the *a* spur; if these were abandoned, the Kenali lines would be useless, for they could be shelled from the rear. But now that the Chuke Ridge had fallen, the *a* ridge could not hold out long. Its left flank was pitilessly shelled by the Allies, and on Monday, the 12th, the Serbs and the French assaulted it in front. The Bulgars were forced to retire, and thus both spurs fell into the hands of the Allies, who were now in the rear of the Kenali lines.

Guns were brought up to the captured heights, and before long a storm of high-explosive shells was assailing the Kenali lines. Meanwhile guns on the plain were battering at the same trenches, and French and Russian troops were advancing against them. A blinding rainstorm hampered the attackers, but during the darkness of night the Bulgars fell back to the little river which you see crossing the plain just south of Monastir.

Meanwhile the Serbians were pushing along the mountains, and were carrying all before them. Desperate struggles gave them two heights northward of the line due east from Monastir, and they were now in a position to threaten the retreat of the Bulgars towards Serbia. On the evening of 18th November the enemy, fearing that he would be cut off, left Monastir. About three o'clock next morning flames were seen rising from some of the buildings, and cavalry patrols were pushed forward to find out what they meant. At dawn it was discovered that the enemy had departed, and by seven o'clock French cavalry were clattering over the cobbles of the town.

* * * * * * *

A correspondent who followed the patrols tells us that as he drove towards Monastir he saw its white minarets gleaming faintly through the mist of a rainy day. Right across the plain, covering the town like a triumphal arch, hung a perfect rainbow, a brilliant span of colour against the dove-gray sky. One foot of the rainbow stood on the western mountains; the other rested on the rocky heights beyond the Cerna, where the Serbians were watching their Allies enter Monastir. Can you not imagine the joy of these men as they saw their first town snatched from the enemy? Many of them cried out that the rainbow was Heaven's promise of victory. Beyond Monastir were the wives and mothers, and aged parents and little children, whom they had been forced to leave behind in the hands of their foes. How their hearts yearned for them! How eagerly they pressed forward towards their loved ones!

As the Allies entered Monastir the townsfolk gathered in the streets, loudly cheering their rescuers and pressing gifts of flowers upon them. As if by magic, Serbian flags began to flutter; and one British flag, which formerly flew over the house of the Consul, waved its welcome. Soon after midday French infantry, headed by bands and unfurled banners, marched in. Once more Monastir was Serbian.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE TREACHERY OF CONSTANTINE.

I HAVE already told you that King Constantine of Greece was eager to throw in his lot with his brother-in-law, the Kaiser. You are now to hear how, in spite of all his treachery, he was prevented from doing so, and forced, against his will, to remain neutral. The story of his falseness, his trickery, and his shuffling shows how well he had learned the lessons which the Kaiser had taught him.

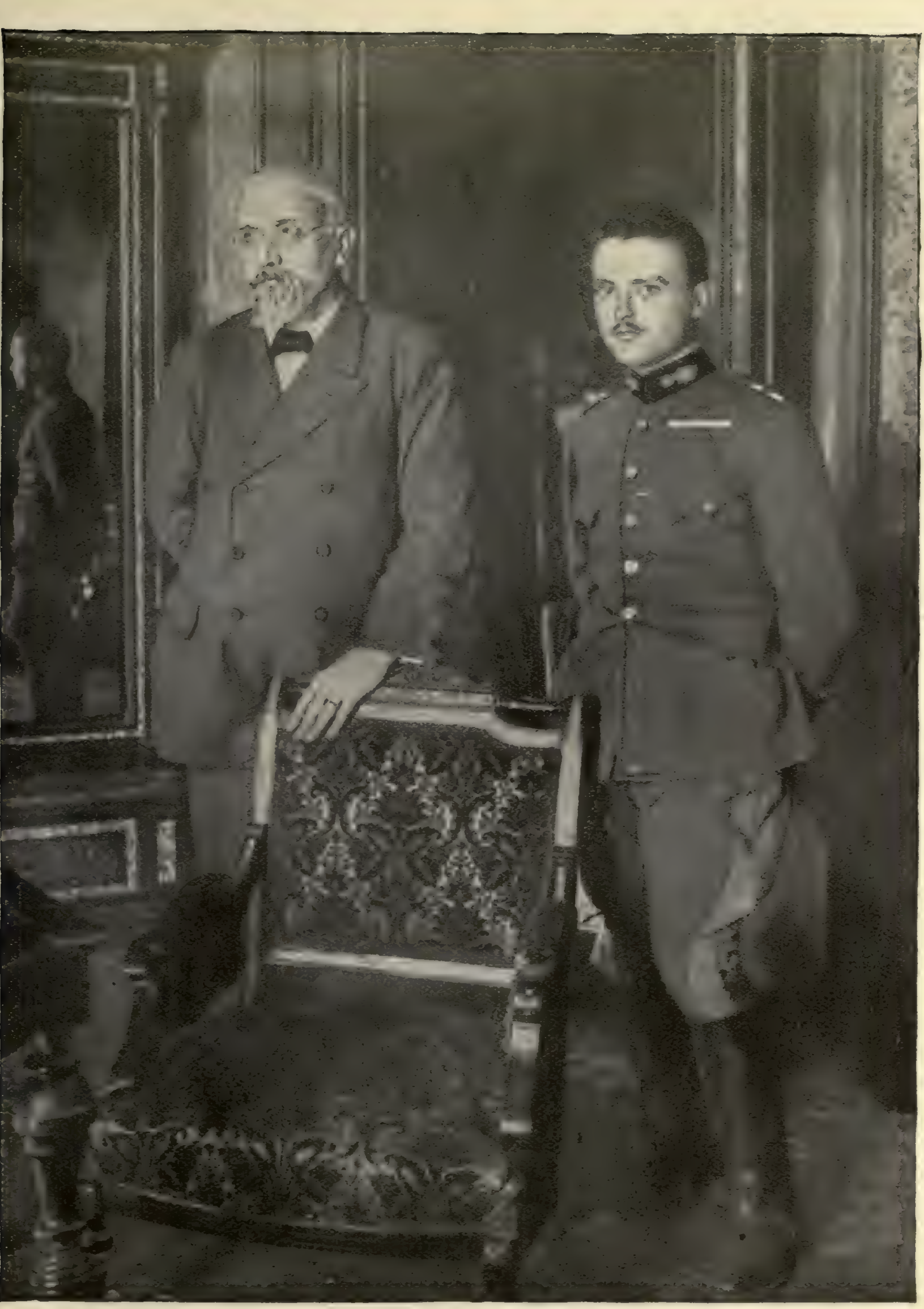
You can readily understand that Constantine dared not declare war on the Allies until he was fully in touch with the Bulgarians, and, through them, with the Austrians and Germans. One of the reasons why the Kaiser persuaded Bulgaria to conquer Macedonia was that he might obtain the help of the Greek army.

There was another reason why Constantine hesitated. Greece, as you know, forms the southern end of the Balkan Peninsula. It is deeply indented by bays and gulfs, and, except for a few plains near the coast, is a land of bare and high mountains. The soil on the uplands is poor ; the summer is hot, and water is scarce. The consequence is, that Greece is obliged to import much of the food upon which her people live. She is also, like Great Britain, a seafaring country, and her shipping trade is very important. All the towns of any consequence lie near the sea. If, therefore, Constantine should declare war on the Allies, they would cut off his shipping trade and bombard his coasts, with the result that he would be forced to surrender, or to see his towns destroyed and his people suffer from hunger. You will see, when I tell you the story, that it was only by stopping his sea trade and threatening the destruction of his towns that he was held in check.

There is still a third reason why he could not easily join his friends. At the close of the Balkan wars Greece made a treaty with Serbia, pledging herself to come to the assistance of that country if it should be attacked. Of course the Kaiser had taught Constantine that treaties are only "scraps of paper," to be torn up when it is inconvenient to fulfil their terms. But though the king was quite ready to desert Serbia, the Prime Minister, Venizelos, was an honourable man, who believed that his country was bound to keep its word or to be branded as faithless. He was supported by a large section of the people, and the king feared that if he openly declared for Germany there would be civil war.

Until the middle of 1915 the Greeks had no liking for the Germans. They were friendly towards Britain, France, and Italy, the Powers which had helped them to win their independence, and had stood by them staunchly through all their troubles. When the war broke out, all the important Greek newspapers took the side of the Allies. The queen, it was true, was a Prussian, and some members of the Court were pro-Germans, but the bulk of the people had no love for the Kaiser and his subjects. About May 1915 a certain Baron Schenck appeared in Greece, and, by all sorts of bribery and underhand arts, began to turn the people against the Allies, and make them look with a favourable eye upon Germany. By this time many of them had begun to think that Germany was bound to win the war. They saw the Russians retreating, and the British unable to make headway in Gallipoli, and they lost faith in the Allies. Some of the newspapers, bribed by Baron Schenck, now began to abuse Italy and Russia, and especially British naval power. From that time onward many Greeks openly favoured Germany.

You know that Venizelos, the Prime Minister and leader of the Liberal Party, was eager to enter the war on behalf of the Allies. The leader of the Royalist Party, on the other hand, wished Greece to remain neutral; and the consequence was a general election (June 1915), in which Venizelos won a sweeping victory. As the king was ill, there was a delay in calling the Parliament together; but on 21st August Venizelos again became Prime Minister. Between the elections and his return to power an important event occurred. The Allies proposed that Greece should give up Eastern Macedonia to Bulgaria, in



Venizelos and his son Sophocles.

(*From official photograph.*)

Eleutherios Venizelos, the great Greek patriot, was born in Crete in 1864. He played an important part in liberating his native land from the Turks, and in 1897 became President of the Cretan National Assembly. Afterwards he was Prime Minister of Crete, and was so successful that the Greek National Assembly invited him to Athens, where he became Prime Minister in 1911. It was he who formed the Balkan League which brought about the Balkan wars. The remainder of his story you will gather from Chapter XXXI.

order to keep her out of the war, and to this Venizelos agreed. At once the Royalists cried out that he was a traitor, prepared to give away part of his country. Many of the Greeks who were friendly to Venizelos left him, and the king saw that the time had come when he could openly play the Kaiser's game.

Meanwhile Venizelos had arranged with the Allies that if the Serbs should be attacked by the Bulgars, British and French troops should be landed at Salonika, in order to lend assistance to the Serbs. On 4th October the Greek Parliament approved of this step, and next day the Allied troops began to land. The same day, however, the king told Venizelos that he would not support this policy. At once the Premier resigned, and a stop-gap Government was put into office. The new Premier said that Greece would remain friendly with the Allies, but would not fulfil the terms of its treaty. On 14th October Bulgaria declared war on Serbia, and three days later it was announced that Great Britain was ready to give Cyprus to Greece if she would join the Allies. This offer was refused. Later on in the month Venizelos and his friends carried a vote of want of confidence in the Government, which resigned. Another Premier was set up ; but as he was at the mercy of Venizelos, the king put an end to the Parliament, and ordered a general election to take place in the following December.

This election was a perfect farce. About half of the electors had been called to the colours, and were therefore under the command of the king. He shut up in barracks all who were opposed to him, and only allowed his friends to go to the poll. The Liberals refused to take part in the elections, and thus a Parliament was elected which was strongly in favour of the king, but did not represent the people at all. The Liberals now began to hold meetings and conferences throughout the country, and the Royalists replied by forbidding them to meet at all.

Now I must tell you of Constantine's first betrayal of his country. While he was pretending to be neutral and friendly with the Allies, the Bulgarians told him that they were about to take the Greek frontier fortress of Rupel. By so doing they would be able to threaten the Greek port of Kavala, which you will remember they afterwards occupied. To his eternal disgrace, the king ordered his troops to withdraw from the fortress, and give up the place to the Bulgarians without striking a blow. The Allies at once protested. They sent a Note to the Greek Government, declaring that the December election was illegal, and demanding an honest election. A few days later they refused to allow Greek ships to enter or leave the harbours. The king and his ministers thereupon stirred up the Army Reservists against the Allies, who now sent another Note, demanding that the army should be disbanded, that fresh elections should take place, and that all the police and other officials who had shown themselves unfriendly to the Allies should be dismissed. The presence of British warships off the coast forced Constantine to agree to these demands. The Government resigned, and another Premier was appointed.

This brings us to the end of August 1916, when Rumania declared war on behalf of the Allies. There was now another chance for Greece to keep faith, for Rumania had helped her to overcome the Bulgarians in the Second Balkan War. For more than a year a minister, who was the Greek king's mouthpiece, had been saying that when Rumania entered the war Greece would do likewise. In saying this he thought he was on safe ground, for he believed that King Ferdinand, who was the Kaiser's cousin, would never dare to show himself unfriendly to Germany. Now that Rumania had declared against Germany, Venizelos went to the Premier and told him that if the king did not march with the Allies, he would prove himself in the eyes of the whole world to be following a German policy and not a Greek policy. He also added that if the king did not join the Allies, it would be his duty to start a revolution. Constantine now became alarmed, especially as there were signs of impatience and unrest in his army, and for a moment began to think of abandoning Germany. The Kaiser, however, sent him a message saying that within a month he would certainly overrun Rumania, and then would be able to fling Sarrail's army into the sea. He begged his brother-in-law to hold out for four weeks longer against Venizelos; and, as of old, the wretched king did his master's bidding.

Venizelos now took action. The country saw clearly that the king would never join the Allies, and a leading admiral and a general, disgusted at his treachery, joined Venizelos, who raised the standard of revolt at Salonika. Venizelos and his friends went to and fro amongst the islands, and speedily a

Greek national army was organized for service with the Allies, who promised Venizelos money and equipment for his men.

The king once more gave open support to the pro-Germans in a variety of ways, and again the Allies found it necessary to send their warships to the Piræus, the port of Athens. On 3rd September they presented the Government with another Note, demanding that enemy agents and spies should be expelled, and that the posts and telegraphs should be handed over to them. German ships in the harbour were seized, and the guns of the warships were trained on the Greek capital; whereupon the Government yielded, and Baron Schenck was sent out of the country. Nevertheless the king was still engaged in trying to thwart and trick the Allies.

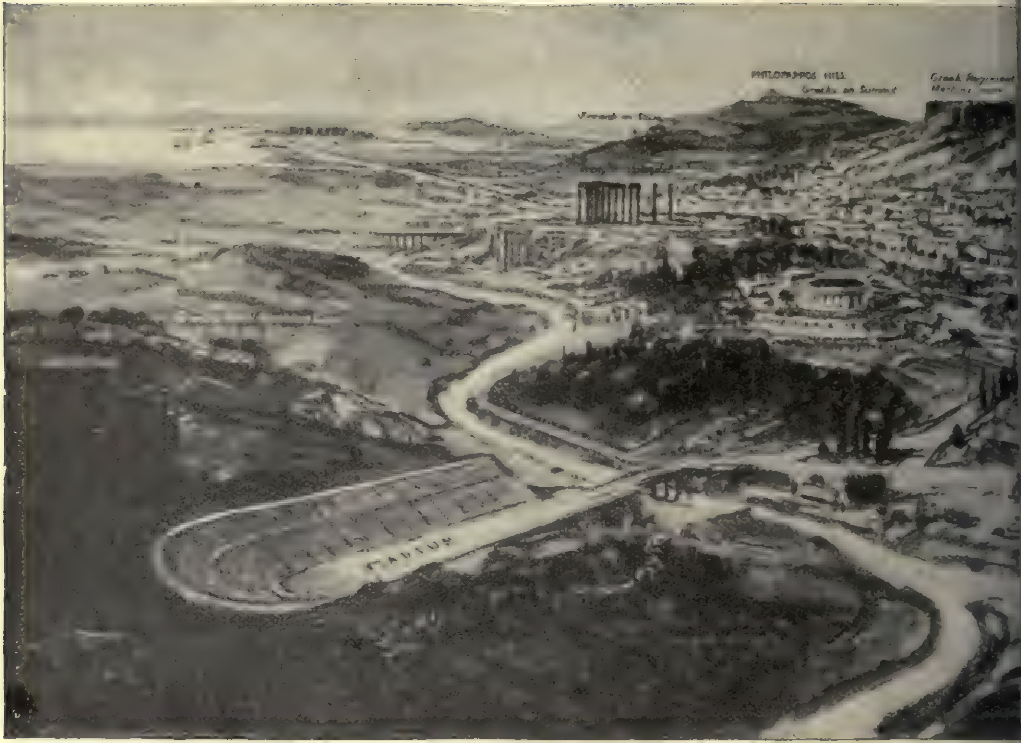
Meanwhile, Venizelos and his friends were gaining ground every day. Men flocked to his banners, especially from the islands and from Crete, the birthplace of the great Greek patriot and the scene of his earliest triumphs. The Premier again resigned, and his place was taken by a man who was an open friend of Germany. Shortly afterwards the king once more betrayed his country. He ordered the fourth Greek army corps, which was stationed at Kavala, to surrender to the enemy. The soldiers were disarmed and sent into Germany. Constantine was determined that they should not fight for the Allies.

Venizelos, still very patient and long-suffering, now made another appeal to the king, and begged him to place himself at the head of the army and lead it against the Central Powers. This appeal was, of course, not listened to; and soon afterwards Venizelos set up a government, which included a former Greek Minister of War, who undertook to organize the army. Confusion now set in at Athens, and the Premier resigned because most of the members of his Government were in favour of going to war. Constantine tried hard to find a Premier who would act as his tool, and at last appointed a harmless professor to the important post. Meanwhile Venizelos had arrived in Salonika, where his companions in arms greeted him with loud cries of joy. He now warned the king that his Government represented the will of the people, and not the king's Government.

Constantine, however, still held out; and on 11th October the French admiral commanding the fleet at Athens demanded the surrender of the whole of the Greek fleet, under threat of a blockade of the Greek coast. The Prime Minister protested, but the fleet was handed over. Constantine now made his last effort to join hands with the Bulgarians. He had massed his army in Thessaly, on the flank of the Allies at Salonika, and trains full of troops, guns, and munitions were constantly being sent northward. The Allies saw clearly that the situation was dangerous. Allied bluejackets were landed to occupy certain of the forts round Athens, and so control the railways; but agitators stirred up the people, and there were many riots. Order, however, was restored, and for a time it seemed as though Constantine was ready to meet the wishes of the Allies. He was, however, biding his time, and making ready to fall upon the flank of Salonika.

On 16th November the Allies determined to make the Greek army powerless for mischief by depriving it of guns, rifles, machine guns, and ammunition. The Greek Government refused to agree to this demand, and Constantine was given until 1st December to hand over ten mountain batteries. He had not done so by the time fixed, and the Allies prepared to land some two thousand troops. On the evening of 30th November Constantine ordered his troops to withdraw from the city, in order, as he said, to prevent fighting between them and the Allies, who were about to be landed. The real object he had in view in withdrawing his troops was that they might take up positions commanding the buildings in which the Allied soldiers were to be housed.

Almost as soon as our forces landed they were fired upon, some of the shots coming from the royal gardens. A battle began, and the Greeks, who were in superior numbers, captured some prisoners. Many men fell on both sides. Between six and seven in the evening the guns of the Allied warships, three or four miles away, opened fire on the city. Shells fell near the royal palace, and Constantine now saw that Athens would soon be in ruins. He therefore asked for a truce, and the Allies agreed to withdraw the troops and refrain from punishing him for three days. During this time he attempted to make terms with the Allies by offering to surrender some, but not all, of the batteries demanded. A reign of terror then began in Athens. Followers of Venizelos were murdered or hurled into prison, and Constantine



Bird's-eye View of Athens, showing the positions held

Greece is a little state, not nearly so large nor so populous as Scotland; yet it is the most famous
Franks, the Phœnicians, and the Turks—and only since 1830 has it been independent. Yet most
more than three hundred years before the birth of Christ. The whole world owes a vast debt to this little

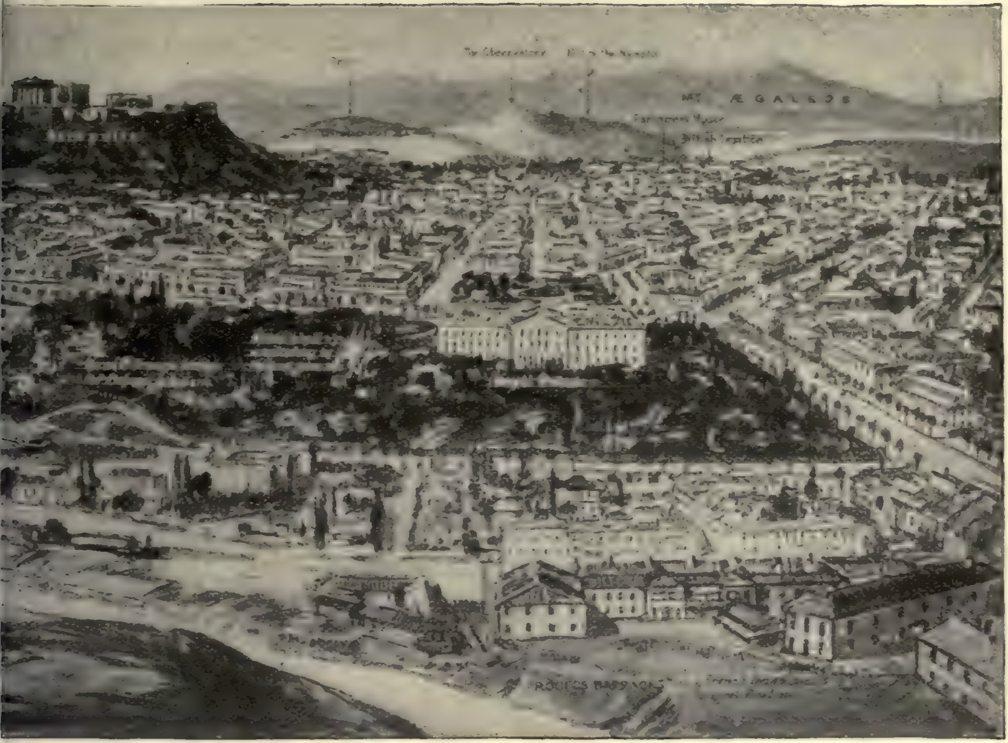
The ancient Greeks were not only clever, but they loved beauty and order, and they made everything
buildings have never had an equal. Every library has on its shelves the works of their writers, and every
have never been excelled. They are models for all time, and this is what we mean when we say that they

You probably know the names of some of the great men who lived and worked in the glorious days of
all of the first rank, and you cannot but marvel that so small a country in such remote times should have
more famous citizens than many great empires have produced in the whole course of their history. How

I have already told you that the country is almost everywhere mountainous, and that it is not naturally
hard, and to make much out of little. The sea, too, played its part in the making of the Greeks. There
the nearness of the sea breed a sailor race, and therefore the early inhabitants of Greece were seafarers,
and fighting battles. In the course of time they became the greatest trading nation and sea power of the
Greeks were left in peace. Then their natural love of beauty and their desire to know all that could be

In later times the glory of Greece departed, and finally the Turks conquered the land. The Greeks
At length, on January 1, 1822, they declared themselves free, and a war followed. Lord Byron, the
cause. The upshot was that the Powers declared Greece independent, and she has remained so ever

Our illustration gives a bird's-eye view of Athens, the capital of Greece, and one of the two most
Piræus. Athens is full of ancient ruins and works of art. Round the steep rocky hill of the Acropolis, or
the Acropolis is Areopagus, or Mars' Hill, where St. Paul preached. On it stand the Parthenon and
In the Palace Square stands the Royal Palace, and near it are the Houses of Parliament. There are
foreground above you see a magnificent Stadium for the Olympic Games. The museum contains the



by the Allies when they were attacked by the Greeks. [*By permission of The Sphere.*

country in the world. For two thousand years it was governed by foreign races—the Romans, the
educated men and women study the history of Greece, and read the books which the old Greeks wrote
country of Greece.
about them, in their cities and homes and daily life, beautiful and harmonious. Their statues and
museum contains the statues and vases of their artists. These beautiful works are still imitated, but
are classical.
ancient Greece. Amongst them were thinkers, playwrights, historians, sculptors, statesmen, and heroes,
produced such a long and splendid array of gifted men. In one single century Greece gave birth to far
do we account for this?
fertile. Greece has always been a poor country, and this means that its people have been trained to work
are few places in the land from which a short walk will not give you a glimpse of the sea. Poverty and
traders, and explorers. They cruised all over the Mediterranean Sea, founding colonies, building cities,
Western world. The Persians tried to conquer them, but were driven back with great slaughter, and the
known of themselves and the world around them had full play, and thus great writers and artists arose.
hated their bondage; but though they rose several times, they could not shake off the yoke of the Turk.
English poet, and many others who loved Greece for the sake of her ancient renown, took up arms in her
since. After the Balkan wars she gained much territory in the north.
famous cities of the world. It stands on a little plain, four miles by rail from its ugly little port, the
citadel, are the remains of some of the grandest buildings which the world has ever seen. To the west of
other temples. Modern Athens is a cheerful little place, with shops full of French and German goods.
several fine public gardens. To the south-east of the Acropolis stands the Temple of Jupiter. In the
finest specimens of Greek art in the world.

became impudent and defiant. The Allies thereupon blockaded the coasts of Greece, but the king still continued to refuse the Allies' demands. Gradually Greece began to feel the pinch of hunger.

On 15th December the Allies gave the Greek Government twenty-four hours in which to stop the movement of all troops and war material to the north. Constantine now understood that he had almost tried the Allies to the full limit of their patience, and that if he resisted much longer the guns of the warships would begin to thunder. At the last moment he gave way; but even when he had done so, his Minister for War praised the troops who had resisted the Allies on 1st and 2nd December, and some of the newspapers spoke of those days as "the most sacred, splendid, and glorious in all Greek history."

Once more the Allies sent a Note to the Greek Government, insisting on the removal of all troops from the north; requiring all the public services to be handed over to them; demanding that all meetings of Reservists should be stopped; that all persons who had been imprisoned should be set at liberty, and that those who had suffered should have their losses made good. Further, the Greek Government must apologize to the Ministers of the Allies, and salute their flags in a public square at Athens. Until all these things were done the blockade would continue. Again Constantine refused to agree, and on January 9, 1917, he was given forty-eight hours in which to change his mind. Before this period came to an end he said he would yield, but still continued to play for time by trying to get the Allies to alter some of their demands. The Allies, however, stood firm, and on 18th January Constantine caved in.

Last scene of all to end this strange, eventful tale of trickery, falsehood, and double dealing. On January 20, 1917, four Allied standards were set up in the square where the firing began on December 1, 1916, and a body of Greek sailors and soldiers saluted them in the presence of the French admiral and detachments of British, French, Italians, and Russians. From the surrounding hills the townsfolk watched their soldiers doing penance in the heart of the Greek capital, beneath the memorials of their former greatness.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE CONQUEST OF GERMAN EAST AFRICA.

AS far back as page 106 of our fifth volume I said that I would describe the fighting in German East Africa when the full story of the campaign could be told. By the close of the year 1916 the Germans, who had held out so long, were cornered; and though the final "round-up" had not taken place, the whole colony had practically passed into our hands. The time, therefore, is now ripe to give you an outline of the warfare which led to this happy result. I cannot, of course, tell you in detail the story of twenty-eight months' fighting in this vast land of mountain, lake, desert, and forest. The seaboard of the colony, you must remember, extends for 620 miles. Its land frontiers are 2,200 miles in length, and in area it is nearly twice that of Germany. These facts alone show you that a skilful enemy operating over such a wide area can play hide-and-seek with the forces opposed to him for a very long time before being brought to bay.

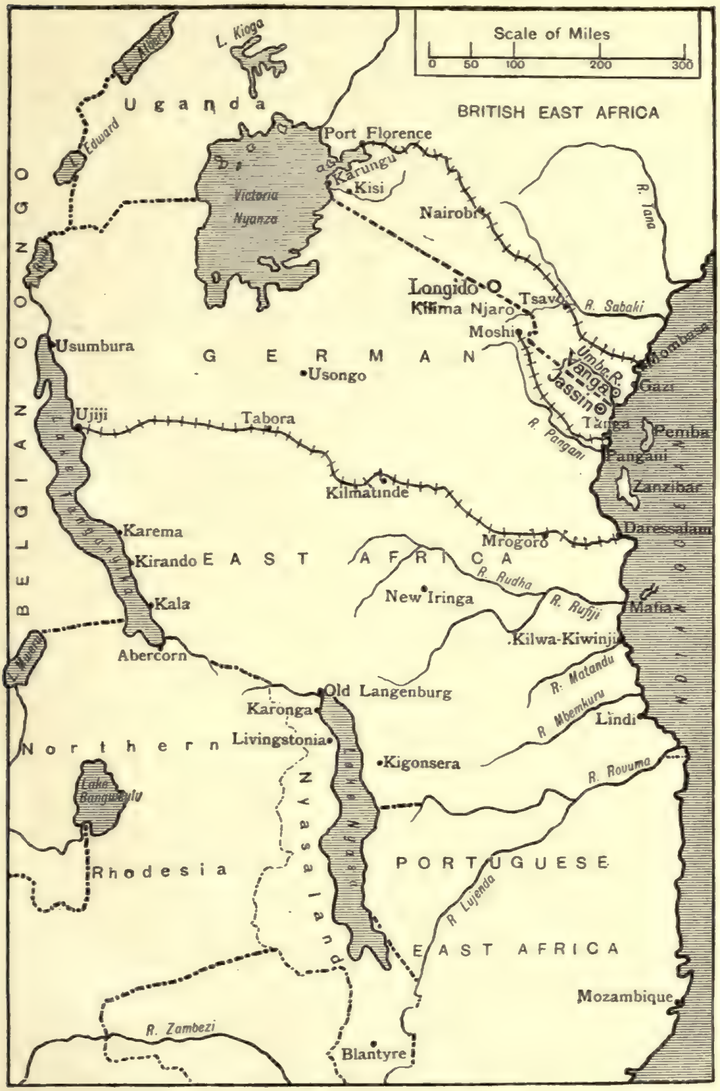
The physical features of German East Africa are on a grand scale; but it has few navigable rivers. Most of the country consists of a huge tableland, parts of which are quite barren, though much of the rest is covered with forests or elephant grass. Big game is plentiful in many regions. The lion, leopard, buffalo, giraffe, all kinds of antelope, "rhino," and "hippo," roam over the land. Snakes abound, crocodiles inhabit the rivers, and one section of the country cannot be traversed by ordinary horses or mules, because it is infested by the tsetse fly. "This place," complained a Cockney motor driver, "is a blooming Zoo, and they don't lock the animals up at night."

The great tableland is cleft by a huge chasm of immense depth, known as the Great Rift Valley, in which lie a series of huge lakes. In the north is Victoria Nyanza, a great inland sea bigger in extent than the whole country of Greece. The northern portion of the lake is in British East Africa, but the bulk of it is included in German East Africa. Along the western boundary, beyond which is the Belgian Congo, lies the long rock-bound ribbon of water known as Tanganyika ; it is from thirty to forty miles wide, and over four hundred miles long. On the southern boundary, between Rhodesia on the west and Portuguese East Africa on the east, lies Lake Nyasa.

About midway between Victoria Nyanza and the low-lying coast stands Kilima Njaro, the highest peak in the whole continent. It rises to almost 20,000 feet above sea level, and was first ascended by a German. When, in 1886, the boundaries of German East Africa were being settled, the first arrangement was to draw the dividing line so that the highest peaks in this region should be on the British side. The Kaiser, then Prince William of Prussia, begged Lord Salisbury to alter the boundary line so that Kilima Njaro, in the vegetation and animals of which he said he was much interested, might be in German territory. Lord Salisbury agreed, and thus gave the German prince the right to boast that the German flag flew on the highest point of Africa. Many of the mountains skirting Lake Tanganyika rise to 10,000 feet.

We do not know how many soldiers Germany had at her command in East Africa when the war broke out, but at the beginning of the year 1916 the number was said to be 4,000 Europeans and 30,000 natives. These troops were well supplied with rifles, machine guns, and ammunition, and were organized in companies from 150 to 200 strong, each containing from fifteen to twenty white men. All the chief Government stations were well fortified, and were connected by well-made roads, suitable for motor traffic. A central railway runs from the port of Dar-es-Salaam to Lake Tanganyika, passing about two hundred and fifty miles east of the lake the town of Tabora, at which many of the main roads meet. Tabora was well defended, and so were other important points, such as Kigoma, the port of Ujiji, and Bismarckburg, both on Lake Tanganyika.

When war began, the Germans were at once ready to take the offensive. They had already planned their campaign. They



The East African Theatre.

meant to invade all the surrounding countries—British East Africa on the north, Belgian Congo on the west, and Rhodesia and Nyasaland on the south. Without any delay they pushed across their northern boundary, and began to attack the Uganda Railway, which runs parallel with the frontier, and is only from fifty to a hundred miles away from it. The German idea was to seize the railway and then advance on the port of Mombasa. In Volume II., page 170, I mentioned the exploits of the German warship, *Königsberg*. This vessel was to bombard Mombasa from the sea, and when the port was reduced, the Germans advancing towards it by land were to occupy it.

Very few British troops were available in East Africa—certainly not more than 1,200 all told—when the Germans began their attacks on the Uganda Railway. They were, however, of good quality, and the whites amongst them were sturdy fellows, good shots, and well acquainted with the methods of frontier fighting. Gallant and sturdy as they were, they could not have made a stand if the Germans had made a serious attack on their country.

I need not describe the earlier fighting in detail. It is mainly the story of how handfuls of Britishers resisted attack after attack of the Germans, and prevented them from conquering British East Africa. I am sure that after reading accounts of the terrific warfare at Verdun and on the Somme, you would think these little frontier fights scarcely worthy of your attention. But you must remember that our men in East Africa had to fight not only against the enemy but against the country as well. They had to trek across waterless deserts, covered with thorny scrub, and suffer from heat, thirst, fever, and disease. Much of the country was without roads or tracks; the maps were bad, and there were constant perils from wild beasts. But as most of the white men on the British side had been trained to bush-fighting and big-game shooting, they were able to make progress where town-bred soldiers would have hopelessly failed.

On November 1, 1914, a British force, consisting of the 1st Loyal North Lancashires, five Indian regiments, and some Imperial Service troops, arrived off the German port of Tanga, which you will see on the map at the seaward end of the railway running north-west towards Kilima Njaro. It was supposed that the post was undefended; but it was soon discovered that the Germans had received warning, had put troops into the place, and were prepared to resist very strongly. Towards evening one and a half battalions of British troops were landed, and were marched through the heavy jungle towards the town. They found themselves held up by every sort of obstacle, some of them very ingenious and deadly. Ropes were hidden under the sand, and when our men stumbled on them they brought down flags in the trees, which gave the enemy the exact range. Hives of wild bees had been placed along the sides of the tracks, and wire or cords had been stretched across the path in such a way that when they were disturbed the lids of the hives were lifted, and the bees swarmed out and plied their stings. One of the Loyal North Lancashires had over a hundred stings extracted from his body.

Despite these difficulties, and the very heavy fire which assailed our men, they managed to get into the town ; but the enemy on the housetops galled them so severely that they were obliged to retire and re-embark, with a loss of nearly eight hundred men. The attack on Tanga was a complete and very costly failure, and the Kaiser described it as a brilliant victory for his forces. An attempt to capture Longido, a mountain stronghold north of Kilima Njaro, also failed. The attack, however, was not fruitless, for the enemy left the place shortly afterwards, and we promptly occupied it.

In April 1915 Brigadier-General Tighe, an Indian officer, was placed in command, and provided with reinforcements. The chief fighting during the summer took place on the shores of Victoria Nyanza and on the borders of Nyasaland and North-East Rhodesia. The Germans still made attempts to cut the Uganda Railway, and several skirmishes took place round about Kilima Njaro.

Now let me tell you of a success which we won at this time. On the western shore of Victoria Nyanza stands the lake port of Bukoba, which the Germans used as a base ; it had a fort, a supply station, and wireless apparatus. We decided to destroy this place, and so put a stop to the enemy's operations in the district. The port lies thirty miles south of the British frontier, and General Tighe's plan was to attack it on two sides. A force was to march south from British territory and assault the fort. Meanwhile another force was to be carried by steamer across the lake for a distance of 240 miles, and was to arrive off the place at the precise moment when the other column attacked it from the north. The land party had to cross a very difficult country of swamp and dense forest; but everything went well, and on 22nd June the Germans in Bukoba were surprised. They fought desperately, but were well beaten, and suffered heavy losses in men and guns. This successful action kept the Uganda borders fairly quiet during the summer.

On the shores of Lake Nyasa our naval forces afterwards destroyed a German town, and captured a large number of rifles and a great store of war material. Meanwhile along the Nyasaland and North-Eastern Rhodesia borders there was sharp fighting, and a post near Abercorn was besieged by the enemy for six days. Reinforcements, however, arrived, and the enemy was beaten off. The Belgian troops defending their frontier in this region gave us the best of help.

From what you have read in this chapter you will gather that so far our East African campaign had gone none too well. We had been trying to overcome a skilful and well-organized enemy with troops all too few for the purpose. At last, in July 1915, we found ourselves in a position to set about the conquest of German East Africa in real earnest. General Botha had completely subdued German South-West Africa, and most of his troops were free for another enterprise. The South African Government agreed to undertake the campaign, and General Smuts called for volunteers. So rapidly did the men join up that by the end of March 1916 two South African brigades had been landed at Mombasa. The forces in the country had already been formed into two divisions.

The Government offered the chief command to General Smuts, but he declined it, because he felt that he was needed at home. Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien was then appointed in his stead, but unhappily he fell into ill-health on his way to Mombasa. Another appeal was made to General Smuts, and this time he accepted the offer. He was created a lieutenant-general in the British army, and on March 5, 1916, began his forward movement. When his force took the field the campaign soon underwent a change. No longer were we engaged in holding our frontiers; thenceforward we were the attackers, and our operations took place in the enemy's country.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

TOWARDS THE END IN GERMAN EAST AFRICA.

YOU already know something of General Smuts, who now took command in German East Africa. You remember that he was one of the ablest of the Boer generals, and that he was famous alike as a scholar, a lawyer, and a soldier. He had been educated at Cambridge, and was an honorary fellow of Christ's College. After the peace which ended the Boer War he was staunch and loyal to the British Crown, and in 1902 became commander-in-chief of the forces in Cape Colony. In German South-West Africa he led one of the armies which added that country to the British Empire.

He was now about to do similar work in German East Africa. In the former chapter I told you that the Germans in that colony invaded the surrounding countries, and put up a very stiff fight. When General Smuts arrived with a sufficiently large force they could not hope to resist him for long; but they were prepared to continue the struggle to the last possible moment, in order to detain in the country troops which otherwise would have been used in France or elsewhere. They did not intend to fight pitched battles, but to retreat before our men and draw them on and on over the waterless deserts and trackless mountains, and through the jungles and fever-laden swamps, in the vain hope that their forces in Europe would prove victorious, and in the fullness of time be able to relieve them.

It is quite impossible for me to describe all the marching and countermarching of this campaign. Frequently the men had to trudge hundreds of miles, and often they had to plod through heavy sand or over bare, dry plains amidst clouds of dust stirred up by men, mules, and wheels. Sometimes the

Artillery on Trek in East Africa.

men's feet were so blistered, and their strength was so reduced by fever, that they dropped by the roadside. Frequently they went thirsty for long hours, and had to live on very short commons. If you had to choose between struggling in the mud on the Somme or trekking over the rugged mountains and parched plains of East Africa, I think you would make the former choice.

General Smuts's first business was to clear the Germans out of the Kilima Njaro district. This he did, and then he began to drive them southward. They made a mistake, and retreated along the Tanga Railway. When they did so " the door of the interior stood wide open and unguarded." Smuts's plan was framed on the lines which had won for us Kamerun. A number of columns advancing from north, west, and south were to drive the enemy from his various strongholds, and herd him steadily towards the sea. Meanwhile the fleet was to sweep the coastline, taking one after another of the harbours on that broken seaboard.

The British forces under Smuts's command were divided into three sections. One section was to work southward towards the central railway from Victoria Nyanza ; a second section, under a very skilful and dashing Boer general named van Deventer, was to push in the same direction towards the railway and seize it in the centre ; a third section was to clear the country north of the Tanga Railway and occupy the coast. Belgian forces were to make two thrusts eastward from the Congo, and at the same time a British force was to strike north-eastward from Nyasaland. With all these spears planted at his breast, the enemy was to be driven southward and eastward until he was cornered.

Now it was very important that the central railway should be captured as soon as possible, so that the enemy should be deprived of his only means of rapidly moving forces to and fro. Early in April van Deventer was ordered to march towards Kilmatinde with all speed. This place stands on the central railway, almost midway between Ujiji, its western terminus, and Dar-es-Salaam, its outlet to the sea. By 19th April van Deventer had made a march of two hundred miles, and was within eighty miles of Kilmatinde ; but during the trek he had lost hundreds of animals from horse sickness, and his troops were worn out with ceaseless marching and fighting.

When the rainy season began he found himself cut off from the other British forces, and very short of supplies. He managed, however, to maintain himself, though many of his men fell sick.

The enemy now thought that he had an excellent chance of wiping out van Deventer's weakened troops. He sent 4,000 men against the 3,000 that the British general could muster, and on 9th May made a most determined attack which lasted eight hours. Four separate times the Germans came on; but every time they were driven back, and in the afternoon of the next day they withdrew. The German commander now knew that he had no hope of resisting the British. All that he could do was to try to save himself from being forced to surrender.

When the rains abated, in the second week of May, Smuts began to advance southward between van Deventer and the coast. In the course of a month his troops marched two hundred miles over most difficult country. With the help of the navy he occupied the whole coastal region to within thirty or forty miles of Dar-es-Salaam. The coast was blockaded, and one by one the ports were captured. Meanwhile British forces in the Victoria Nyanza region were moving, and a Belgian column pushed across Lake Kivu. Together these columns cleared all the north-western part of the colony. About the same time another Belgian force captured Ujiji, and shortly afterwards van Deventer reached the railway at Kilmatinde, and began working eastward to join hands with Smuts. From Nyasaland General Northey was advancing to the north-east, and the combined result of all these movements was to force the Germans to retire to Mrogoro, on the central railway, where it was hoped that they would be brought to bay.

When, however, General Smuts reached the place, he discovered that the enemy had escaped by a track unknown to him, and had taken refuge amidst the very rugged hills lying south of the railway. In this mountain stronghold he hoped to hold out for a long time; but towards the end of August he was driven out, and was forced to take refuge in the hills of the Rufiji valley.

Meanwhile there was a good deal of hard fighting going on to the south-east of Tabora, which had been strongly fortified. It was defended by the Prussian general Wahle, who had about four thousand native troops and over five hundred

Europeans under his command. Finally, however, the Belgians advancing from Ujiji gave him a good beating, and Tabora was occupied. In the town the Belgians found over one hundred British subjects, who had been imprisoned for two years and had been shamefully treated.

Wahle tried to retreat along the railroad, but van Deventer blocked his path; a column from the north harassed his flank, and he was forced to go south. He did not attempt to join his comrades in the Rufiji valley, but struck at the lines which General Northey held north-east of Lake Nyasa, in the hope of reaching the high and healthy plateau of the Mahenge. General Northey at that time was holding a line of 200 miles by means of posts, which were garrisoned by a handful of men, and kept in touch by patrols. Wahle, with 400 Germans, attacked one such post held by fifty British, and drove the little garrison off after it had lost half its number in killed and wounded. He then attacked other posts, and managed to reach the Mahenge plateau. One of the posts held out splendidly under the command of Captain Marriott, who was afterwards rewarded with the Military Cross. On 30th October General Northey cornered and defeated a German column, which suffered very heavily; but fighting went on in this region until the December rains began to fall. By this time Wahle had lost half his forces and many of his guns.

At the end of the year he was still holding out; but it was clear that his days were numbered. The British were hemming him in with a ring of iron, and his destruction or surrender was only a matter of time. General Smuts was also pressing his attacks from three sides against the main body of Germans on the Rufiji, and they too were in desperate straits. At the close of the year the great bulk of Germany's last colony had been captured.

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The following heroes won Victoria Crosses during the campaign described in this and the preceding chapter:—

LIEUTENANT WILBUR DARTNELL, 25th (Service) Battalion (Frontiersmen), Royal Fusiliers (City of London Regiment).

Lieutenant Dartnell was by birth an Australian, and for some time before the war had been well known as an actor. He had fought through the South African campaign, and he was eager to "do his bit" when Britain called her sons to arms.

On September 3, 1915, during a mounted infantry engagement near Maktau, the enemy approached within a few yards of our men, and it was found impossible to get the more severely wounded away. At the time Lieutenant Dartnell was suffering from a wound in the leg. Nevertheless, when he saw that some of his poor comrades were likely to be murdered by the enemy's black troops, he insisted on being left behind, in the hope that he might save them. What became of him we are not told. He, too, was probably murdered. "He gave his own life in the gallant attempt to save others."

MAJOR WILLIAM ANDERSON BLOOMFIELD.

Major Bloomfield was born in Edinburgh in 1873, and as a lad went with his parents to South Africa. His youth was spent in Port Elizabeth, and when he reached manhood he joined the Cape Mounted Police, and saw much service in native wars. When the Boer War broke out he was engaged in business in a town of the Eastern Transvaal. He joined the Boer Ambulance, and was present at several of the big battles. After the war he played a leading part in the public life of his town. When General Botha called for volunteers to proceed to German South-West Africa he joined up at once, and fought in the victorious campaign. When General Smuts took over the command in German East Africa, he was given the rank of captain. In March 1917 it was announced that he had won the Victoria Cross for splendid gallantry in action. No details have been given as to the exploit which earned him this proud distinction.

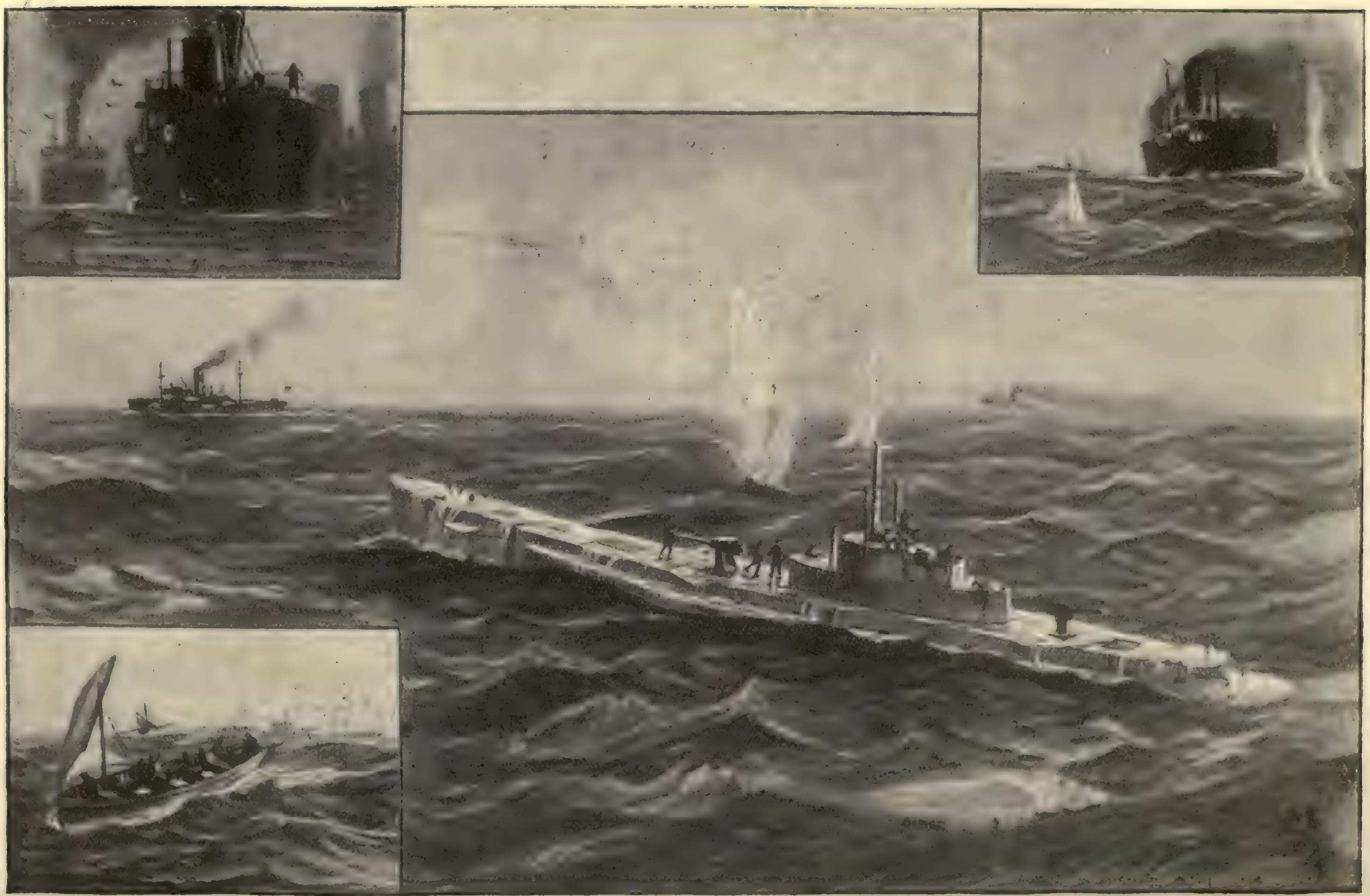
CHAPTER XXXIV.

GERMANY ASKS FOR PEACE.

SO far in this volume you have heard nothing of the war at sea. After the great battle of Jutland on 31st May the Germans did not for the rest of the year challenge the naval might of Britain. Their ships had been badly mauled, and at least nine of them, along with six destroyers and a submarine, had been sent to the bottom. Only the thick weather and the coming on of night had enabled the rest to escape destruction. Thereafter they confined themselves to "tip and run" adventures. On more than one occasion their destroyers dashed out of Zeebrugge, and made little raids on our ships in the Channel, and then scuttled home as fast as possible. These poor successes were all that their navy could claim during the latter half of the year.

Submarine warfare, however, continued apace. The enemy had built under-water craft capable of making voyages across the Atlantic, and of operating off the American coast. Attacks were frequently made upon neutral vessels as well as upon our own ships, and many were sunk. The crews and passengers were forced into small boats and left to the mercy of the wind and the waves. Horrible tales were told of their sufferings. The pirates of the Spanish Main did not show themselves more brutal towards their captives than some of the German submarine commanders.

The Germans had announced that they would sink at sight any vessel making for a British port, and they were as good as their word. On 24th March the cross-Channel steamer *Sussex*, with American passengers on board, was torpedoed, but was towed into Boulogne with the loss of a hundred lives. Afterwards several liners were sent to the bottom, as well as two



A German Submarine attacking a Tramp Steamer. [*By permission of The Sphere.*

hospital ships. When the Anchor liner *Caledonia* was sunk in the Mediterranean on 4th December, her captain, James Blackie, was taken prisoner, and many people supposed that he would suffer the fate that befell poor Captain Fryatt of the *Brussels*. Happily his life was spared.

Ever since the submarine warfare began, the United States had protested against such illegal warfare; and when the Germans put forward the claim that Americans should be warned not to sail in British passenger ships, there was great indignation. It was held that the subjects of the United States had the right to travel where and how they pleased, and that it was the duty of their Government to protect them while so doing. The sinking of the *Sussex* brought the matter to a head. A fresh Note was sent to Germany, in which the German Government was given the choice between discontinuing the submarine campaign, with all its attendant cruelty, and going to war with the United States. After a great deal of shuffling, the German Government said it would not sink merchantmen without warning and without the saving of lives unless the ships attempted to escape or offered resistance. At the same time it expected that the United States would do its best to put an end to the British blockade.

You can easily see that the Germans had not promised much. It was still open to their commanders to sink ships and then excuse themselves by saying that the vessels had resisted or tried to escape. Nevertheless the American people believed that they had forced the Germans to climb down, and they were greatly pleased at what they thought to be their success. The Germans, however, had no intention of keeping their word for a moment longer than it suited them to do so. We shall read in our next volume how they broke faith, and how this knavery, together with other wicked attempts to injure the United States both at home and abroad, forced the American people into war.

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I must now tell you of a very important change which took place in the British Government early in December 1916. You will remember that when the war broke out a Liberal Government was in power, under the premiership of Mr. Asquith. In May 1915 he changed the character of the Ministry, and by including in it men of all parties, set up a

National Government. In the latter part of the year 1916 this Government had to face many difficulties and meet many complaints. Both in and out of the House of Commons men declared that the war was not being pushed with enough vigour, and that the Government was too slow in making up its mind about the necessary steps which ought to be taken. Some grumbled because so many men had escaped military service ; others said that the Air Board was not doing its work properly ; while others, again, complained that the Admiralty had allowed German destroyers to raid the Channel. The ravages of the submarines also caused great uneasiness throughout the country.

At the beginning of December Mr. Lloyd George, who was known everywhere as the man of " push and go," proposed to Mr. Asquith that a committee of seven ministers should be appointed to carry on the war, and that the Prime Minister should not be a member of this committee. His object was to take the conduct of the war out of the hands of the large Cabinet and entrust it to a smaller body, which could rapidly come to a decision and get things done. Mr. Asquith refused to be shut out of this committee. Then the Unionist members of the Cabinet urged the Prime Minister to resign, and some of them threatened that if he did not do so they would resign, and thus break up the Government. Attempts were made to bridge over the difficulties between Mr. Lloyd George and the Premier, but without success, and on 5th December Mr. Lloyd George resigned. After this blow Mr. Asquith felt that he could not carry on, and he resigned too.

The King sent for Mr. Bonar Law, and asked him to form a government ; but after thinking over the matter for twenty-four hours he declined, and Mr. Lloyd George was asked to take office. He accepted, and then proceeded to form a government on new lines. He reduced the size of the Cabinet from twenty-three members to five, and placed the whole direction of the war in the hands of these five. Business men were brought in to take charge of certain of the great departments of State, and all parties in the House, including Mr. Asquith, Viscount Grey, and the other Liberals who had been members of the former Cabinet, promised to support the new Government loyally.

On 11th December Mr. Lloyd George's Government was complete, and the next day the German Chancellor sent forth a message declaring that the moment had now arrived for making peace. He actually dared to say that Germany and her friends had been obliged to take up arms to defend justice and their right to develop in their own way. He then went on to announce that the Central Powers had no wish to shatter or wipe out their enemies. Though they knew that they could, if necessary, continue to the bitter end the war which had been forced upon them, they wished to avoid further bloodshed, and were therefore ready to make peace.

Such in effect was the Note which the German Government sent to the chief neutral countries, with a request that it should be forwarded to the Allies. On the same day, in the German Parliament, the German Chancellor made a speech which showed clearly the spirit in which peace was offered. He began by boasting of Germany's unconquerable strength, and the wonderful genius of her generals. He talked of the splendid victories which Germany had won " over superior numbers," of her heroic deeds, of her " unshaken lines," of the submarines, which had raised " the spectre of famine amongst the Allies," of her power to win even further successes; and finished up with a veiled threat that there were awful terrors in store for the Allies if they did not agree to the German terms. " Every German heart," he said, " would burn in sacred wrath " at the wickedness of the Allies if they did not make peace forthwith.

Never before had a request for peace been put forward in such a bombastic and insulting manner. The Allies, of course, were not deceived. They knew that if two men are engaged in a struggle it is not the winner who calls aloud for peace. They were convinced that Germany would never try to break off the war if she was sure of final victory. Her offer was a clear sign that she recognized defeat as her lot if the war should continue. The Allies, of course, saw through the lying pretence that Germany was anxious to avoid bloodshed, and that she was offering peace simply out of pity for poor, suffering mankind. How could they think otherwise when they remembered the deeds of atrocious cruelty which had made the German name stink in the nostrils of all free nations ? There was ont a true man in the whole British Empire who would consent to peace on such terms. All felt that Germany was still unsubdued, and that the war must continue until she was ready to plead for forgiveness for the terrible crimes which she had committed.

On 18th December Mr. Lloyd George made his first speech in the House of Commons as British Prime Minister, and at once began to refer to the German offer of peace. He took his stand upon the well-known words of Abraham Lincoln: "We accepted this war for an object, a worthy object, and the war will end when that object is attained. Under God, I hope it will never end until that time." He pointed out that Germany had not made any proposals of peace, and that to call a conference without knowing what the enemy's terms were was "to put our heads into a noose with the rope end in the hands of Germany." The only terms which the Allies could accept were that Germany should restore all that she had ruined, make amends for the wrong that she had done, and give real guarantees that she would not offend again.

There was no sign that the German Chancellor was prepared to accept these terms. He did not even seem to be aware that his country had committed any offence against the rights of free nations. In his Note he said that the Central Powers had always respected the rights of other nations so long as they did not conflict with their own rights and interests.

> "Where," asked the Prime Minister, "was the respect for the rights of other nations in Belgium and Serbia? That was self-defence! Menaced, I suppose, by the overwhelming armies of Belgium, the Germans had been forced into invading Belgium, burning Belgian cities and villages, massacring thousands of inhabitants old and young, and carrying off the survivors into bondage. Yea, and they were carrying them into slavery at the very moment when this Note was being written. . . ."

"This," he declared, "is not the moment for peace." If Germany after two and a half years of war could put forward such excuses for her crimes, what guarantee had the Allies that similar excuses would not be made in the future to overthrow any treaty of peace which the Allies might make with her? The Note proved that the Germans had not learned the very alphabet of respect for the rights of others. Unless Germany was ready to make amends peace was impossible. The whole speech of the German Chancellor resounded with the boast of Prussian military triumph. The appeal for peace was trumpeted abroad from a triumphal chariot. The Allies entered the war in order to defend Europe against the Prussian soldier caste, and they could only end it when their "swashbuckling through the streets of Europe" was brought to an end for ever.

"*We will, therefore, wait until we hear what terms and guarantees the German Government offer other than those, better than those, surer than those which she has so lightly broken. Meantime we shall put our trust in an unbroken army rather than in a broken faith.*"

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On 20th December President Wilson sent a Note to all the nations at war, saying that, as a friend, he had long desired to suggest a course of action to them. He assured them that his suggestion had not been prompted by the German offer of peace. His Note was to this effect, that all the nations at war should set forth the terms on which they were ready to make peace. He pointed out that, according to the statements which the governments at war had made to their own peoples and to the world, each side was fighting for the same objects—namely, to secure the rights of weak peoples and small states against the tyranny of powerful states. Each side wished to be made secure in the future against the outbreak of another terrible world-war. He therefore invited the nations to state their terms clearly, so that the world might know exactly what each side really wanted in order to bring the war to an end. He was not, he said, proposing peace; he was merely proposing that soundings should be taken in order that the neutral nations might learn how near the fighting nations were to the haven of peace.

This Note was not well received by the Allies. Many people thought that President Wilson was playing the German game, and others were very angry because he seemed to say that the war aims of both sides were much the same. The Allies were convinced that they entered the war with clean hands, desiring only to protect the little nations from the wicked violence of men who openly denied them the right to exist, and had set themselves to win the mastery of the world. The difference between their war aims and those of the Germans was as light to darkness and as good to evil, whatever the enemy might say to the contrary.

On 30th December the Allies made a joint reply to the German Peace Note. In it they declared that Germany's offer was "empty and insincere." Once more they announced that they would only end the war when Germany agreed to restore all that she had ruined, make amends for the wrong which she had done, and give real guarantees that she would not offend again. At this there was great anger in Germany. The Allies' Note was declared to be a flat refusal, and the Kaiser sent out a vicious order to his army and navy, in which he urged them to merciless warfare, and said that the enemy Governments alone were responsible for all the bloodshed that would follow. " 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth'—that is the watchword for the campaign of 1917. Our enemies have willed it. Let us take care that terror comes upon them."

On January 12, 1917, the Allies sent their reply to President Wilson's Peace Note. It set forth very clearly the objects for which they entered the war, and the terms on which they were prepared to end it. The reply was so clear and straightforward that it won friends in every neutral country, especially in America. The German reply was so quibbling that it provoked nothing but disgust. A further statement, written by Mr. Balfour, was sent to the United States towards the end of January, and it had a very good effect on public opinion. Then those who had mistrusted President Wilson began to see that his proposal was a very clever move indeed; for only that side which had honest and sincere aims could set them forth so as to convince neutrals. From this moment the American people began to lean strongly to the side of the Allies.

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I opened this volume with a passage from John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, picturing the state of mind of Christian at the moment when he had passed through the first part of the Valley of the Shadow:—

"From the place where he now stood, even to the end of the valley, the way was all along set so full of snares, traps, gins, and nets here, and so full of pits, pitfalls, deep holes, and shelvings down there, that had it now been dark, as it was when he came to the first part of the way, had he a thousand souls, they had in reason been cast away; but, as I said, just now the sun was shining."

The sun that shone upon the Allies during the year 1916 was frequently obscured by cloud, and at no time was it the full blaze of noontide. Nevertheless its cheering beams grew brighter as the months passed, and by the end of the year had inspired full confidence in the hearts of those who had so long fought in the gloom.

The conflicts of the year showed clearly that the Central Powers could no longer conduct a strong offensive and make a strong defence at the same time on either the Western or the Eastern front. When, for example, they appeared to be on the brink of victory at Verdun, the British and French offensive on the Somme forced them to slacken off in the former arena, with the result that later in the year nearly all the lost ground had been recovered. So it was in the East. When the Austrians in the Trentino had blasted back the Italian centre, and it seemed likely that in a few days they would be marching across the north Italian plain and sacking the rich old cities of that favoured region, the Russian offensive was launched, and proved so successful that the Austrians had to quit the Italian border and rush to the succour of their armies which were being wiped out between the Pripet and the borders of Rumania. When they did so, Italy was able to push forward again, and recover the positions which she had lost. She was also able to advance along the line of the Isonzo.

Again, in the last month of the year, the same weakness appeared on the enemy side. When the Kaiser massed his legions for the overrunning of Rumania, he could not at the same time give much help to the Bulgars, and the consequence was that they were pushed back, and the Serb soldiers were able to advance into their native land once more. Though it was known that the Germans would leave no stone unturned to fill up the wasted ranks of their armies for the new year, all felt that the day of their downfall was not far distant. Their offer of peace proved that they saw the hour of doom approaching, and hoped to ride off with their spoils before vengeance overtook them.

During the last six months of the year all British eyes were turned to the battlefields on the Somme, where the pride and hope of the country was raining blow after blow on the Germans. For half a year, with true British doggedness, we persevered in our task of wearing down the enemy, and forcing him from the strongholds on which he had lavished his art and labour for more than two years. Our progress was slow, but it was very sure; and though we had not reaped the full reward of our efforts at the close of the year, our generals felt sure that it must come before long.

So, when the long year drew to an end, Britain's highest hopes rested on the splendid valour and grim determination of her citizen soldiers. In the short space of two and a half years she had transformed herself as a military power, and her armies were now on the same footing as those of other European countries. The young and vigorous manhood of Britain was, for the first time in history, fully arrayed in arms. When Hercules in the old fairy tale sowed the dragon's teeth, warriors sprang up all over the field. So it was with Britain when Germany began her assault on the liberties of mankind.

The new armies were composed of all sorts and conditions of men in the British Empire. Peers, professors, shopkeepers, clerks, artisans, and labourers stood shoulder to shoulder. Out of this raw but very willing and intelligent material the finest soldiers in the world were created—men who were eager to fight and die, if need be, that righteousness might be the law of the world and that freedom might be its heritage. Thousands of those who were ready to lay down their lives for their country hated war, but they hated far more the loss of all that made life worth living. Many of them must have asked themselves :—

"'What if, 'mid the cannons' thunder,
Whistling shot and bursting bomb,
When my brothers fall around me,
Should my heart grow cold and numb?'
But the drum
Answered 'Come!
Better there in death united, than in life a recreant,
—Come!'"

END OF VOLUME VI.

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